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SIR LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA O.M., R.A.

BY

PERCY CROSS STANDING

"Art must be beautiful because Art must elevate, not teach; when Art teaches in the common sense of the word, it becomes accessory to some other object. In elevating, it only teaches because it ennobles the mind."—ALMA-TADEMA.

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UNIFORM WITH THIS WORK.

HENRIETTA RAE

(Mrs. Ernest Normand).

By ARTHUR FISH.

With Eight Illustrations in Colour and Thirty-two in Black and White.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED, *London; Paris, New York and Melbourne.*

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PRINCIPAL HONOURS CONFERRED ON SIR L. ALMA-TADEMA.

1862. Gold Medal at Amsterdam.
1864. Gold Medal of the Salon, Paris.
1866. Knighthood of the Order of King Leopold of Belgium.
1867. Second Class Medal at the Paris Exposition.
1868. Knighthood of the Lion of the Netherlands.
1869. Knighthood of the Second Class of St. Michael.
1870. Elected Member of the Royal Academy of Munich.
1873. Knighthood of the Order of the Legion of Honour, France.
1874. Elected Member of the Royal Academy, Berlin; Large Gold Medal.
1876. Elected Associate of the Royal Academy, London; Medal of the Philadelphia International Exhibition.
1877. Medal of the Royal Scottish Academy.
1878. Gold Medal of the Paris Exposition.
1879. Elected a Royal Academician, London.
1880. Gold Medal of the Melbourne International Exhibition.
1881. The Prussian Order of Merit.
1889. Gold Medal of the Paris Universal Exposition.
1893. Gold Medal of the Chicago International Exhibition.
1893. Gold Medal of the Academy of St. Luke, Rome.
1894. Gold Medal, Vienna.
1898. Great Gold Medal of the Brussels Exhibition.
1899. Knighted by Her Majesty Queen Victoria.
1905. Order of Merit conferred by H.M. King Edward VII.

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SIR LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA, O.M., R.A.

CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

BORN at the little village of Dronryp—between Harlingen, opposite Texel Island, and Leeuwarden—in the Frisian province of Holland, on January 8th, 1836, it cannot with truth be averred that Lourens (Lawrence) Alma-Tadema was entirely cradled in the lap of luxury. That is to say, his father belonged to that large and honourable class of practitioners, the notaries, and enjoyed a fairly prosperous practice; but when Lourens had barely attained the age of four years his male parent died, and the widow was left, in exceedingly straitened circumstances, with five children to provide for—viz., Lourens and his little sister, and three boys the offspring of a former marriage. Of the future artist's father, all that we know with certainty is that he was a musical enthusiast, and a man of real artistic merit and accomplishment.

The mother Tadema was, it may be

imagined, faced by a problem of no ordinary difficulty; but, being a woman of undaunted courage and resource, she set to work with a brave heart. It may be said at once that she was completely successful in her unequal fight with the battle of life, and all her children turned out well. From earliest childhood—one might almost say from babyhood—Lourens was possessed by the idea that he would be an artist. There is, in fact, one of the usual "fabling stories" to which all genius is subjected, to the effect that he corrected a mistake in a drawing master's design before he had attained his fifth year! And certain it is that he could "draw" before he had wholly lost the lisp of babyhood.

The immediate vicinity of Leeuwarden is singularly picturesque in a country generally noted for its flatness, while the ancient church of Dronryp stood perched upon one of the hillocks that were wont to be erected by the sturdy Frieslanders in order to escape the floods. Moreover, Alma-Tadema recalls that in the days of his childhood the women of the countryside still affected the old-fashioned but beautiful costume peculiar to their nationality —the quaintly brilliant gowns of many hues, the towering caps, and the veils that imparted so characteristically stately an accompaniment to the whole. It used to be the lad's delight to make childish sketches of these his countrywomen, or, indeed, of anything that attracted

his attention in a way to inspire his already nimble pencil. From the first he was a loving and lovable boy, inspiring the affection of all around him. Among his schoolfellows was Bisschop, likewise destined to fame as a painter.

In the beautiful country surrounding his birthplace, says his friend Ebers, he "received the first impressions of childhood; here, perhaps, the bright colours and brilliant light, afterwards so exquisitely portrayed by his art, were stamped upon his soul. In this region, too, the only antiquities found in Holland (coins and ornaments of the Merovingian period) were discovered, and seeming trifles often gave the artist's soul the impulse to the grandest achievements. Was he, afterwards the artist of the Merovingian dynasty, directed towards that great and bloody epoch of French history by some of these things, a word heard or picture seen when a child? His father died young, but his noble mother understood how to train the vivacious boy with tenderness and discretion. Like many sons whose education is directed by a widowed mother, his mind and imagination developed with special harmony and vigour."

Yet, to the boy's utter dismay and chagrin, it was decreed that he should follow the profession of his father—the law. In the Friesland of that day the art of the painter was generally regarded as that of the actor was for many generations looked upon in this country—

certainly not as a calling to be adopted by the respectable, or by such as desired some day to take a place of honour and esteem among the good citizens of their native land. The fact remains that the dreamy and enthusiastic lad was nearly condemned to pass the term of his natural life amid the dry-as-dust surroundings of a lawyer's office. Sent to a Greek and Latin preparatory school, he determined, even now, to snatch every moment that he could to devote to the art he already passionately loved, so he would rise before daylight and paint until he had to go to the office. In order to effect this, Lourens attached a string to his big toe when he went to bed at night. This string communicated with his mother's bedroom, and at five o'clock in the morning his mother would jerk the string to awaken Lourens, who would then rise and begin the work that he loved before proceeding to start the work that he loathed. A pretty story, and, moreover, a true one.

"I did not entirely dislike the study of the ancient languages," he told me once, "for they have influenced my art all through my life." But he chafed at the thought of any career save the art that he longed for.

It was during this period that he exhibited, in a Dutch gallery in 1851, when he was aged fifteen, a portrait of his sister. No doubt the work was immature, but it is said to have been full of the promise of fulfilment.

But suddenly Fate, "the business-manager of Providence," intervened in behalf of poor Lourens. His health collapsed, and broke down utterly under the strain imposed by having to follow one path of duty while yearning for the other of inclination. It was not at first recognised that this collapse was directly induced by the mental strain. In fact, it was gravely argued that the youth had not long to live in any case, and so, to his unspeakable joy, it was decreed that he might rest from his legal labours. From that moment his health commenced to improve.

It may here be mentioned, as there has been a good deal of misconception on the point, that Tadema was christened "Lourens Alma-Tadema," and did *not* subsequently add the prefix "Alma" to the surname. Indeed, he himself once told the writer that at the tender age of *six* he began to sign his drawings "L. Alma-Tadema." His godfather was Lourens Alma, a brother-in-law of his mother.

It may be imagined with what unfeigned joy and delight the youth now turned to pursue his art career, untrammelled and untroubled by the vexations hitherto imposed upon his sensitive heart and brain. He had conquered—had conquered by means of what was for him, under Providence, a most merciful accident; and it was now for him to show of what stuff he was made, and how he proposed to shape and make his life's work. It

was still no path of roses that he trod. In the light of after happenings, it seems a severe reflection upon the artistic discernment of his native homeland that the artist failed to obtain a start in the academies of Holland. It is, none the less, a fact. Hence it was that he took up his residence at Antwerp in 1852, and there commenced to work in the Academy with all the enthusiasm, high purpose, and rigid self-criticism that have characterised his aims from end to end of his art career. So much high purpose and self-criticism, in fact, that he destroyed canvas after canvas of his own that did not quite please him or attain his ideal of what should be. "Tadema did not merely *work* at Antwerp," wrote a friend. "He slaved in his efforts to make up for all the precious time he had lost." It is of interest to note that at Antwerp many years afterwards was produced a play from the pen of the artist's eldest daughter, Miss Laurence Alma-Tadema.

Antwerp and its associations had, not unnaturally, an almost instantaneous effect upon the young Tadema's output. The celebrated Wappers* was the acknowledged head of one —the *romantique* school—of the two great schools or camps into which the Flemish art of that day was divided, whilst the principles of Louis David dominated the other. Alma-Tadema became in some sense a disciple of

* Wappers' most famous work is his "Episode de la Révolution Belge."

Wappers, because this master's particular school—the Belgic-Flemish—cherished as its avowed object the revival of all that was best and grandest in the work of the old Dutch and Belgian masters. Wappers left Antwerp some six months after Tadema's arrival there, but Lourens had also the benefit of the tuition of De Keyser, who had always represented the same tendencies as his predecessor.

These hard-working days in the great storehouse of Flemish art were among the happiest, as well as the most momentous, of Alma-Tadema's career. The happiest, because he had the supreme satisfaction of being joined at Antwerp in 1859 by his mother and sister, to whom he was tenderly attached ; the most momentous, because here he stood, in the heart of the art-world, with his foot on the first rung of the ladder of fame at this the very outset of his real education. The first large picture that he attempted in the Belgian art school was "The Destruction of Terdoest Abbey," with which he was so dissatisfied that he gave it to his mother to use as an oilcloth for the dining-table of her large family !

In 1858, after some months of the Academy, the student became a pupil of the famous Baron Leys, whose influence controlled him for a considerable period. In addition to working on several pictures of this master (especially his "Golden Fleece," which was his principal exhibit at the London

Universal Exhibition of 1862), he was privileged to assist Leys in his great fresco-work for the Town Hall of Antwerp. It was, indeed, a great stroke of good fortune for the young man that Leys should have been engaged to carry out this particular piece of work at a time when Alma-Tadema was working in his studio. In addition to the master's own immense store of historical and archæological knowledge, Alma-Tadema also derived much valuable information and historical detail from Louis de Taye, the professor of archæology at the Academy of Antwerp. The subjects selected by Baron Leys for his six frescoes in the Town Hall were in every case chosen from the glowing annals of the history of the great Flemish city. In this way again, therefore, did Alma-Tadema acquire much of the knowledge necessary to the making of good pictures.

Leys appears to have been a kindly, if at times severe, critic of his pupil's work. It was under his guidance that Alma-Tadema began to put forth that skill in the painting of marble which he has since brought to such a pitch of excellence. Whilst occupied on the picture of "Luther," now in the possession of Sir Cuthbert Quilter, he asked Alma-Tadema to insert in the picture a Gothic table. When his wish was complied with, he remarked, "It is not my idea of a table. I want one that everybody knocks his knees to pieces on." Hence the table now in the picture, which he

approved of ultimately. And when in 1861 he came to Alma-Tadema's study to view "The Education of the Children of Clovis," he remarked, "That marble is cheese, and those children are not studied from nature!"

Although the loved and honoured pupil of Leys, Alma-Tadema never permitted his own individuality to be merged in that of his mentor. On this point he himself has said, "If I have obtained any degree of success, it is because I have always been faithful to my own ideas, followed the inspirations of my own brain, and imitated no other artist. Whoever wishes to accomplish anything in any career in life must first be faithful to his own nature."

In later life, Alma-Tadema has loved to speculate upon the fruitful theme of the possibility or impracticability of a subject for a picture in its relation to the exact sentiment to be conveyed; and this especially in its effect upon the purely literary tone of so much of the art-criticism of the day. "I remember," he once said, "that a great professor of history at the University of Ghent repeatedly recommended me to paint that striking incident in history where William the Silent, when leaving the Netherlands to organise that great struggle with Spain, in answer to the parting words of Counts Egmont and Horn ('Good-bye, noble Prince without a country'), said, 'Good-bye, noble men without heads.' Of course, the feeling of such a scene cannot be given

in a picture. What subject is there in the Venus of Milo that can be written down? Yet nobody will deny that it is one of the greatest works of art. What subject is there in Raphael's Sistine Madonna? It is in the ecstasy of the Madonna, the beautiful serenity of the Venus, that lies the charm."

It is not strange that Alma-Tadema holds the memory of Leys in veneration. The Flemish master was not "Baron" Leys at the moment when Alma-Tadema first came under his influence, but received this richly merited honour from Leopold I. in 1867, after his great success in the Universal Exhibition of Paris. He did more than anyone else to foster in his pupils that devotion to the depicting of native subjects which dominated Alma-Tadema's earlier period as a painter. The best of Baron Leys' pictures are unquestionably for all time. I would especially particularise his well-known "Erasmus in his Study," "Rembrandt's Studio," "Rubens Feasted by the Gunsmiths of Antwerp," and "The Institution of the Golden Fleece." Leys died in 1869, the last few years of his life having been occupied in the decoration of Antwerp Town Hall, just referred to, with Alma-Tadema and Napier Hemy, A.R.A., for his scholars, assistants, and friends. It is a pathetic circumstance that his task in connection with the frescoes was not completed at the time of his decease.

Alma-Tadema never accepted any pecu-

niary recognition from Leys in connection with his work on the Baron's pictures. He realised that he owed, and would always owe, a great deal to the master's tuition. At the same time, the influence of Leys with him was not of long duration; Alma-Tadema's own individuality was too powerful to allow of his being anyone but "himself" for very long. It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the importance to him of his connection with Antwerp, the proud city that had produced a Rubens, a Vandyck, a Matsys, a Teniers, a Van Brée, a Jordaens, and a Leys.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY SUCCESSES: THE GAMBART CONTRACT.

FROM the time of his all too brief acquaintance with Leys, events moved swiftly with Alma-Tadema. After his mother arrived to make her home with him he appears to have laboured with even renewed energy. He was at this moment gradually more and more strongly attracted towards the Frankish or Merovingian period of history, to the more intimate study of which he gave a large proportion of his life's work. This is a study replete with fascinated interest, and in Alma-Tadema's case it speedily brought forth fruit. To a certain, or uncertain, extent he may have been influenced by a reading of Augustin Thierry's "Récit du Temps Merovingius" and of Gregory of Tours' "History of the Franks," and in any case he laboured hard after precise historical and archæological accurateness of design and treatment. He also studied all the foremost books on the period in question. The first result was a picture, "Clotilde at the Grave of her Grandchildren." On the statement, made at haphazard, that this episode was "entirely without foundation in fact," Alma-Tadema once remarked to the writer: "That the faithful

THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF CLOVIS.

Clotilde, having lost all hope of influence by the murder of her grandchildren, should have wept at their grave, is but human, and, as such, certainly historic." This work was executed before he knew Leys. He painted it in the studio of Louis de Taye during the time he helped him to paint his "Bataille de Poitiers," and Madame de Taye kindly sat for the head and arms of Clotilde.

Now came his initial triumph. In 1861, at the Antwerp Exhibition, the young painter made a real sensation with a splendid picture on which he had exhausted an infinity of pains. This is the canvas, which speedily became world renowned, entitled "The School for Vengeance: the Education of the Children of Clovis." It is a theme that has been oft described; the lay-reader may find a sufficiently lucid interpretation of the subject in any history of France. It was the first picture he painted under Leys' instructions. Several years afterwards this inspiration of Alma-Tadema's brush attracted a large share of attention when exhibited, with twelve other canvases of his, in the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867. It represents work that will inevitably live; and Alma-Tadema was glad to sell it to the Antwerp Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts for 1,600 francs!

Originally acquired by the King of the Belgians in the Art Union of the Antwerp Exhibition, "The Education of the Children of

Clovis" eventually passed into the possession of Sir John Pender.*

Alma-Tadema immediately followed it up with other profound studies of the half savage, half romantic, wholly enthralling epoch of Europe before the tenth century. This time he went to the making of the Germanic nations during the seventh century, and took as his theme "Venantius, Fortunatus, and Radegonda." It was immediately acclaimed. He exhibited it at Amsterdam in 1862, and it triumphantly carried off the gold medal of that institution. Furthermore, he was straightway elected a member of the Academy of Amsterdam. The picture is now in the museum at Dordrecht.

His venerable mother just survived to witness this triumph of her dearly loved son. She passed away a few months afterwards, in 1863, leaving him with a sheaf of bitter-sweet memories of his struggles for a future, and of his dear mother's devotion in the most depressing circumstances of genteel poverty. In September that same year Alma-Tadema was united in marriage to a French lady of great attainments and of noble family. Madame Alma-Tadema was a Gressin de Boisgirard.

Working, meanwhile, upon another canvas of the Frankish epoch—"Fredegonda at the Death-bed of Prætextatus"—which was shown in the Paris Salon in 1865 and at Ghent, and

* Rennefeld's engraving of this picture made the tour of the world.

was lithographed at the expense of the Society of Fine Arts of that ancient city (1865), he removed to Brussels in 1865. It remained his home until the autumn of 1870, his studio being established at 51, Rue des Palais.

Why was Alma-Tadema so powerfully attracted towards this period of the Merovingian dynasty in Western Europe—a period, "as a whole, monstrous and detestable"? * The answer has been given by the artist himself. "They are a sorry lot, to be sure, these Merovingians," he said to Vosmaer,† "but still they are picturesque and interesting." Could one find a fitter rejoinder?

Of this Fredegonda picture, which he finished some three years after becoming Leys' pupil and helper, Ebers finely says, "all Tadema's great qualities appear, thorough comprehension of the subject, harmonious composition, loving choice and elaboration of detail, and a fidelity in architecture and costume that rejects everything the connoisseur might exclude."

The "story" of this fine painting refers to the death of Prætextatus, the Bishop of Rouen, from wounds inflicted by assassins who were hired by Fredegonda for the purpose. The venerable dying prelate is in the act of denouncing the murderess, who has come to his bedside, accompanied by the Dukes Beppolen

* G. Ebers.

† Vosmaer was the author of a romance, "The Amazon," in which the artist Aisma is a copy of Alma-Tadema.

and Ausolwald, pretending to be angered at what has taken place. Says the bishop, "Who has done this thing? The same who has killed our kings, who has so often spilt innocent blood, and has been guilty of so many crimes in this kingdom." "I have many skilled physicians," answers the guilty woman; "let me send them to thee." "Me," rejoins the venerable victim, "God would now call away from this world, but thou who hast caused all these sins wilt be cursed to all eternity, and God will avenge my blood upon thine head" (Gregory of Tours). This subject was informed by an enormous and gratifying advance in the artist's mastery of technique and of detail.

The story of Alma-Tadema's meeting with "Prince" Gambart, the picture-dealer whose smile or frown meant so much to the young artists of the time, reads almost like a romance. Gambart was in very truth the Napoleon of the Continental art world. To secure his favour, or even his notice, painters would take the utmost pains and make the greatest sacrifices. He controlled the market. There was only one Gambart, and he made his power felt. He was a man of discernment, and was also the man who introduced Leys to the English art world and recognised the genius of Rosa Bonheur.

It was by this remarkable man that Alma-Tadema was taken up. Although it cannot be

said that their introduction was absolutely unpremeditated, neither did the "advance"—if it might be so termed—come actually from Alma-Tadema himself. It may be imagined that countless were the efforts made by young and, for the most part, unrecognised artists to approach the astute Gambart. In the case of Alma-Tadema, the introduction was brought about in the following manner.

This modern Mæcenas was bound for the house of Dyckmans—Dyckmans during this period being a highly successful painter. A loyal and good friend of Alma-Tadema's, Victor Lagye by name, contrived to give Gambart's coachman a wrong address, with the joyful result that the "Prince" in his equipage drew up at the studio of Alma-Tadema instead of at his predestined destination. The plot proved completely successful. "In the doorway stood the young painter, palpitating with excitement."

Gambart now perceived his error. But, being of a sporting turn of mind, he entered the studio.

He stood for some minutes in front of the easel, whereon was displayed Alma-Tadema's latest effort.

"Is the picture on the easel painted for anybody?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Alma-Tadema.

"Has the purchaser seen it yet?"

"No."

"Then it is mine!"

And it duly became his. Nor did the matter end here.

On his return to Antwerp after the delivery of the first picture, the great dealer commissioned no fewer than *twenty-four* pictures from Alma-Tadema's brush. Having discovered a genius, his aim, of course, was to bind that genius to him by ropes of—gold. He forthwith arranged, on a frankly commercial basis, to pay his new "find" for his work upon a progressive scale—*i.e.*, raising the price with each successive picture delivered.

At the same time, it at first appeared as though there were "breakers ahead" for employer and employed. Alma-Tadema already wanted to break away from his heretofore favourite themes of the Frankish era, and to engage upon subjects of a more classical *genre*. This resolution of his led to countless discussions between him and his patron; but the artist prevailed, and was permitted to desert the Middle Ages in favour of another and more remote period, Gambart having found it easier to place his pictures of antiquity than those inspired by the Middle Ages.

Yet it occupied four long years of the artist's life to carry out this first commission from the picture prince. And that is calculating at the rate of six pictures per annum!

"Gunthram Bose" was another of the Merovingian Period paintings produced (in

FREDEGONDA AT THE DEATH-BED OF PRÆTEXTATUS.

1862) before the artist turned in earnest to his classical themes. This work was a striking object-lesson in Alma-Tadema's gradually developing capacity for microscopic detail—for filling every inch of a small canvas—a field in which he may well be said to have rivalled Meissonier. The precise subject is the attack upon Gunthram Bose, while escorting his daughters from the asylum of St. Martin de Tours, by the followers of Chilperic. Gunthram, after commending the poor girls to God and His Saints, falls upon the enemy, slays their leader, and saves his children. Alma-Tadema also painted, about this period, "The Death of Galsvintha," who is "strangled for Fredegonda's sake."

Gambart was exceedingly well pleased with his contract with Alma-Tadema, in whom the astute dealer had instantaneously recognised one of the most brilliant painters of the age. And to him came Gambart, at the fulfilment of the first contract, with a proposal for a new and stupendous agreement.

His proposition was in some sense a singular one. This time the artist was to paint no fewer than *forty-eight* pictures, divided into three classes of importance, the first of which was to be remunerated at a price where the previous order had ceased (about £80), and so on upon an ascending scale until the completion of the first twelve subjects. The scale of the second class started at £100, the scale

of the third at £120. Now, Alma-Tadema had faith in Gambart, and did not forget how "the Prince" had in the first instance taken him by the hand. Moreover, it suited the young artist—who day by day was becoming better known for work that had already brought a new note into the art of the Continent—to renew the contract, undismayed by the magnitude of his task. As a matter of fact, Gambart was not ungenerous, and had already proved himself to be tremendously appreciative.

One of the first twelve pictures of this second series was that justly celebrated painting, "The Vintage," which Gambart immediately perceived to be immeasurably the most important subject that Alma-Tadema had approached for the purposes of this contract. He therefore announced his intention of paying for it at the rate which he had stipulated to pay for the last half-dozen pictures. Nor did the matter rest here. Directly upon the completion of "The Vintage" (and on the eve of Alma-Tadema's departure for England), the merchant-prince gave a dinner to the artists of Brussels. Not until Alma-Tadema took his seat at the table did he realise that the "guest of the evening" was none other than himself. In addition to a handsome present of plate, the gratified artist found tucked into his table-napkin a cheque for £100, being the sum in excess of the arranged

THE VINTAGE FESTIVAL.

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price for "The Vintage" which his employer had decided to pay.

It is so difficult, however, to continue to speak of Alma-Tadema's works in their order of sequence that it may be as well now to deal with the chain of events slowly but surely leading up to his change of mood and subject as expressed in paintings of "The Vintage" order.

But, first, a few words concerning the celebrated Georg Ebers, one of Alma-Tadema's devoted friends and admirers, who is also the author of an admirable exposition and estimate of his friend's work. His sympathy with Alma-Tadema was largely based upon Ebers' extraordinary knowledge of Egyptology, of which he became professor first at Iéna and afterwards at Leipzig. In addition to his great work, "Egypt and the Books of Moses," Ebers published several excellent romances, with a view to popularising the Egyptian lore which he loved so well through this medium. These historical novels comprise "Varda," "Serapis," "The Sisters," and "Homo Sum," all of which attained varying degrees of popularity.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST VISIT TO ITALY, AND FRIENDSHIP WITH EBERS.

IT has been already implied that the year 1863 was one of peculiar momentum to the young artist, by reason of the demise of his mother and of his first marriage. In another respect, as affecting his art, the year was not less momentous, inasmuch as it witnessed his initial visit to Italy and an astonishing effect upon his artistic output.

The Italian itinerary comprised Florence, Rome, and Naples. Alma-Tadema the buoyant, the impulsive, the enthusiastic, was straightway captured by the teeming traditions, the living beauties and possibilities, of a world that he had heretofore only dreamed of. He went wild with thought of the new old-world visions and vistas opening out before him. For him the ugliness and pitiless squalor of Merovingia's history—of cloistered queens and slaughtered kings—as in a flash began to be made manifest. He had been painting the Kingdom of Hate—he who loved love and beauty and joy of life in all its many matchless forms and aspects. He would no more of it; of that he became most speedily convinced. To him henceforward

the classic school should be dedicate. There should be, there must be, no compromise.

He undertook the journey to Italy in the autumn of 1863 (his honeymoon tour) with the conviction that the Early Christian churches in Italy would assist him in furthering his studies of the early Middle Ages; and so it was that he spent so much more time in the study of the Italian schools of painting, although the Roman antiquities of Pompeii and the splendid museums of sculpture in Rome and Naples, and even Florence, fascinated him to such an extent that soon after his return to the north, Roman and Greek researches transplanted the early Middle Ages and made him the exponent of Roman and Grecian civilisation.

His dearly loved friend and commentator, Georg Ebers, writes in reference to Alma-Tadema's change from the portrayal of incidents and episodes in a savagely splendid epoch to the greater humanity of scenes taken from the heart of a people's life:—

"He has only known them in a state of turmoil and restless excitement. As soon as the sensible lover of the historic life of mankind discovers this fact, he turns from the political history of royal families and governments, and perceives that a people's true history is the history of its civilisation, which teaches the normal character of nations, their life in a condition of health, and he joyfully perceives

how much more delightful it is to make himself familiar with the homes of the people to be investigated, the regulations of their government, their civil and social life, their religion and science, than to know the names and bloody deeds of their kings and the battles they fought. From the kingdom of the Franks Alma-Tadema turned to Rome and Hellas, and here the progress of civilisation awakened an interest that far outweighed every other. . . . His gaze extended to the borders of the earth, and, instead of seeking subjects in the pages of a vivid historian, he fixed his eyes on the nations of antiquity, and, without troubling himself much about their political history, began to investigate their life in all its phases. The aspect of nature in Southern Europe appealed powerfully to his soul. The deep blue of the sky which overarches Italy, the varying hues of the waves that wash its shore, made a profound impression upon him, and blended their glitter with the sunny radiance of his own artist soul. He examined marble, the mother of so many works of art, wherever he found it: in its quarry, amid ruins, and in new palaces, and learned to know it in every stage of its existence, every shade of colouring, and every imaginable light. I have spent delightful sunny days with him on the shore of the Mediterranean. One beautiful spring morning—the sea was sparkling like pure sapphires, and the prince's garden was dis-

playing the most luxuriant vernal green foliage —he stood silently beside me a long time, revelling in this splendour ; at last he exclaimed, 'Can there be anything more superb ? And yet fools say that pale green and blue do not harmonise ! ' "

Ebers makes us comprehend the appeal made to Alma-Tadema's soul by the new conditions, the novel sights and sounds of the Italian environment. The only thing to detract in any way or ever so slightly from the value of Ebers' criticism is his extraordinary affection for the artist, which is observable in well-nigh every sentence that he wrote about him.

In this same memorable year, 1863, "at the portal, as it were, of his road through antiquity," Alma-Tadema created the first of his astonishing series of Egyptian pictures. One uses the word "astonishing" advisedly and in a double sense of the word, as it was not until nearly four decades afterwards that he visited the Land of the Pharaohs at all. The subject of this first excursion into Egypt was "Three Thousand Years Ago," reproducing with life-like fidelity that which we know to have been the approved holiday pleasure of the early Egyptians. His next two attempts in this kind were respectively entitled "An Egyptian at his Doorway" and "The Chess-players." So careful at all times about detail, he took extraordinary care in the preparation of his preliminary sketches for these

pictures. His viewpoint sensibly broadened out by his studies in the south, until Egypt, in his well-arranged mind, became bracketed with Greece and Rome.

It was Ebers* who asked Alma-Tadema why he had chosen to desert the field of Frankish romance in favour of painting pictures of Egyptian types and subjects. "Where else should I have begun," rejoined the artist, "as soon as I had become acquainted with the life of the ancients? The first thing a child learns of ancient history is about the court of Pharaoh; and if we go back to the source of art and science, must we not return to Egypt?"

In fine, Alma-Tadema's first visit to Italy was a revelation to him. It also extended his archæological learning to such a degree that "his brain soon became a complete encyclopædia of antiquity." Much of his time in Rome and other cities was occupied in exploring ruined temples, ruined palaces, ruins of amphitheatres, and, in fact, every niche and corner reminiscent of a bygone age. Long years afterwards these beauties lived, as they had already lived in his pictures, in the splendid Pompeian home that he reared for himself in the heart of foggy London. Or, as one writer has not unworthily expressed it, "the famous Dutchman called to life amid the London fog the sacrifices of Pompeii and Herculaneum."

* Professor Ebers died in 1898.

ROSE OF ALL THE ROSES.

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CHAPTER IV.

HIS HOME IN ENGLAND.

ALMA-TADEMA'S first married life lasted for about six years, and was fraught with much happiness for him. Four years and a half after the death of their only son, Madame Tadema died at Brussels in May, 1869, leaving her husband with two little daughters, Laurence and Anna. The elder of these two gifted ladies, Miss Laurence Alma-Tadema, is a well-known writer of stories, plays, and poems, of established repute. Her plays have been staged with success both in London and on the Continent. Of her more serious work, Miss Alma-Tadema's romance "The Wings of Icarus," and the remarkable strength of her tragic playlet *The Unseen Helmsman*, have the most powerfully impressed the present writer. Her sister, Miss Anna Alma-Tadema, has attained some distinction as an artist, having in the first instance, of course, studied under her father and stepmother. She has won medals at the Berlin and Paris Expositions for some particularly dainty and distinctive work.

Too young to have any pictures on view at the London Exhibition of 1862, the work of Alma-Tadema's brush was already known in

England, thanks to Gambart, in 1864. In the 'sixty-two Exhibition, however, the work of at least two Belgic masters gained well-deserved recognition and honour. Leys showed his altogether admirable "Luther Singing the Canticles in the Streets of Eisenach," "The Institution of the Order of the Golden Fleece," and several other important pictures. The second Belgian honoured there was Louis Gallait, renowned for his "Last Moments of Count Egmont" and "Last Honours Paid to Counts Egmont and Horn," the latter being the ghastly canvas best known to the art public as "Les Têtes Coupées."

I have said that London was Alma-Tadema's obvious goal. In 1865 his work was exhibited there for the first time. This was at the old French Gallery, where his "Egyptian Games" and "Sortie de l'Église" were hung. In 1866 these were followed by other pictures painted for Gambart—"Portico of a Roman Theatre" and "Roman Lady Returning from Making Purchases"—both shown at the French Gallery without attracting much apparent attention.

But that Alma-Tadema was gradually winning his way to honourable recognition on the part of the English public is shown by this tribute from what was at that time the only exclusively art journal of the day in reference to his exhibit in the French Gallery of 1867: "We cannot close without calling attention to a class of remarkable pictures which, founded on

IN CONFIDENCE.

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the antique, seeks to reanimate the life of the old Romans. In this range of subject, which has for the imagination singular fascination, Alma-Tadema shows surpassing mastery. 'Tibulus' Visit to Delia' has the merit of being a study and feast for the antiquary, so careful and true are the restorations. The pigments are a little opaque, as if the artist had carried in his mind the ancient practice of *tempera*. Yet does the painter put forth the full power of his palette, and through contrasts and harmonies gain marvellous results."

Very shortly after the death of his wife Alma-Tadema came to London. On arrival in the metropolis, his first idea for a studio and *pied-à-terre* was the unromantic vicinity of Camden Square, in North London, occupying for six months the house and studio of Mr. Fred Goodall, R.A., who was travelling in Egypt during that time. But he knew that in St. John's Wood and its neighbourhood he would find himself surrounded by many leading members of the artist community of the metropolis. Thither he removed, therefore, on his second marriage, which took place on July 29th, 1871.

Alma-Tadema's second wife was, as Miss Laura Theresa Epps, his pupil from the age of eighteen. Since her marriage she has made enormous strides with her painting, and among her well-deserved honours may be mentioned the gold medal of the Berlin Exhibition of 1896 (for the admirable painting entitled "Satisfaction")

and the silver medal of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. For twenty years she has been a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy, and in her work—more particularly, perhaps, in devoting herself to the tradition of the old Dutch masters—the influence of her husband and mentor is frequently observable. The best known among her paintings, perhaps, are "The Carol," "Persuasion," "The Shadow of the Future" (purchased by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales), "The Ring," "The New Book," "Sisters," "Hush-a-bye," and "The Pain of Parting," the last-named having for its motto two expressive lines from Burns:

> "I can dee, but canna' part,
> My bonnie dearie."

On his marriage with Miss Epps, Alma-Tadema ensconced himself and his family in a charmingly pretty house ("Townshend House") in Park Road, Regent's Park, and, in intervals of his painting, set himself to transform this cosy residence into the nearest approach to a Roman villa that his knowledge and his resources could achieve. The result was equally a source of unfeigned delight to himself, his family, and his friends. The Tademas continued to reside in this "pretty box," as Milton would have called it, until 1874, when an untoward event drove them first to Rome for the winter of 1874–5, and afterwards into larger and more commodious premises in St. John's Wood.

DOLCE FAR NIENTE.

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The accident referred to was the terrible explosion of a barge, laden with some high explosive, while passing up Regent's Canal in the small hours of the morning. The remains of the poor people in charge of the boat were never found, all the houses in the immediate neighbourhood were more or less badly damaged, and some were wrecked. Such was the force of this tremendous upheaval that, it being feared that some of the cages in the Zoological Gardens might have been shattered, the gardens were promptly surrounded by troops from the neighbouring barracks, armed with ball cartridge. Fortunately, this additional calamity had not taken place, albeit the shock of the explosion greatly alarmed and excited the beasts in the cages. They were much too frightened to move, but the birds escaped from their damaged cages in great numbers, returning, however, to find their food.

Alma-Tadema's residence, from its exposed position where the canal intersects Regent's Park, suffered severely. His two little girls had a really miraculous escape. They were aroused by the window-sash being suddenly blown on to the bed in which they lay sleeping, while at the same time hundreds of hazel-nuts (a portion of the cargo of the ill-fated barge) were wafted about the wrecked house.

The place was "restored" by Alma-Tadema's own exertions, and was subsequently occupied

by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, whose generous hospitality the present writer well remembers having enjoyed there.

Alma-Tadema's "A Roman Emperor" was painted (for Gambart) during his occupation of Goodall's studio. It was during his residence in Rome, after the explosion, that he executed the greater part of "An Audience at Agrippa's," in every way one of his most significant undertakings, in which "a whole historic epoch is crystallised and rendered concrete." It was finished in Brussels, on the way to Italy, in 1875. In this fine work the artist does not for a moment sacrifice the effect of the story to its magical environment of mosaics, marbles, statue, and background of sky. Alma-Tadema made of this subject one of his most noteworthy and most universally acclaimed triumphs.

Although the partial demolition of his London home must have been in the nature of a heavy blow to Alma-Tadema, he applied himself with characteristic ardour and enthusiasm to the task of restoring it. Some years later, however, he acquired and proceeded to reconstruct the mansion, with its extensive grounds, in the Grove End Road, which has since become one of the most celebrated of London's houses. It would be a work of supererogation to describe this house—or, rather, this delicious blend of old Rome, old Athens, and of the natural country.

SPRING. SUMMER. AUTUMN. WINTER.

THE FOUR SEASONS.

From the Etchings on Zinc by L. Lowenstam.

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"A fireplace of white and coloured marble, surmounted by an unusually sightly chimney, in the shape of a silvered column with gilt capital and base," wrote an early visitor to the house, "is one of the features of the lesser studio; also a window of onyx and transparent marble, brought from Townshend House. The walls, and a low arch at one end of the room, are entirely white, but the loftier and greater portion of the ceiling is embellished by beams and panels of polished woods, principally of pitch-pine, which is also the material used for the flooring, bookcases, and general woodwork.

"The studio is on a higher level than its companion apartment; at the head of a short flight of steps a small landing with open balustrades overlooks the lower room, the floor of which is tiled and the decoration simple. One wall is fitted with doors ornamented by plates of metal, on which are etched, by Mr. Leopold Lowenstam, sketches of Alma-Tadema's 'Four Seasons'; these doors slide into the wall, and leave a wide opening, which communicates directly with the garden, making the room perfect in summer. In the centre of this opening stands a stone column which was brought from Brambletye House, in Sussex, built in the seventeenth century by a brother of Oliver Cromwell."

For nearly twenty years after entering into possession of it, Alma-Tadema and his artistic wife laboured at the congenial task

of rendering their splendid home more and more a thing of beauty. Moreover, they have been greatly aided in this task by the loving efforts of friends and admirers of the master. Thus, one of the loveliest features in the entire scheme is the unending series of panel-paintings wherewith many of Alma-Tadema's distinguished contemporaries have enriched the fine entrance hall. Specimens from Boughton, Sargent, Calderon, Van Haanen, are here. Very notable among these dainty panels are "The Bath of Psyche" by the late Lord Leighton, "A Temple at Philæ" by the Hon. John Collier, "Cherry Garden Stairs" by Mr. Charles Wyllie, "A Bit of Old Hampstead" by Mr. Charles Green, "A Landscape" by Mr. H. W. B. Davis, and "Apple Blossoms" by Mr. Alfred Parsons. In more than one instance these "tall, long pictures," as Monkhouse calls them, have proved the inspiration for an elaborate painting, as was the case with the exquisite panel contributed by Lord Leighton. Wonderfully varied as they are, these panels are a source of never-ending joy alike to the inmates and visitors at Grove End Road. The expression "never-ending" is here employed advisedly, for with the spacious hall well filled they would overflow into other apartments of the house—that is, so long as Alma-Tadema's colleagues and admirers maintained the supply. The very idea of the panels was a charming tribute to the master's invincible

popularity. There are some fifty of them at least. Mr. Briton Riviere has contributed a beautiful picture of three lions in the night, and other contributors are Sir E. J. Poynter, P.R.A., Mr. East, Mr. David Murray, and Mr. Wirgman—not to mention a delightful specimen of the art of Waterlow, a delicious Dicksee, and a hugely characteristic MacWhirter.

The two studios, Alma-Tadema's and his wife's, are an essential feature in the scheme of this house. His own is illustrative alike of the artist and the man, and it is also a marvel of comfortableness, because Alma-Tadema works in an "open" studio, where his friends may visit him. His wife's spacious studio is a boudoir as well, in the style of Dutch Renaissance, and here she "receives" and paints away at the quaint and pretty subjects that have earned her such high honours from the academies of England and the Continent.

In speaking of Alma-Tadema's first London residence, Townshend House, I might have mentioned that its attractions included a ceiling painted by himself, whilst the classical subjects with which he adorned his studio included "Venus and Mars" and "Bacchus and Silenus." The latter suffered a hard and unromantic fate, being irretrievably damaged by the bursting of a water-pipe during the occupation of the house by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones.

Alma-Tadema's house in Grove End Road was originally numbered seventeen, and seven-

teen is his "lucky number." Lady Alma-Tadema was seventeen when he first met her. It was on August 17th (1886) that he began to rebuild the house. And it was on November 17th, three years later, that he and his family went into residence there. Moreover, Townshend House was No. 17, Tichfield Terrace, N.W.

At the time when he first pitched his tent in St. John's Wood, Alma-Tadema could reckon among his "neighbours" a large number of the most talented men and women in London. At one time or another, George Eliot, Tom Hood, Douglas Jerrold, Shirley Brooks, Mdlle. Titiens, and Hepworth-Dixon were all residents of this delightful corner of the metropolis, not to mention Landseer and a great many of Alma-Tadema's brother-artists. For obvious reasons, St. John's Wood must always remain a principal resort of the painting fraternity of London.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema was granted letters of denization as a British subject in 1873, the year in which he finished "The Death of the First-born."

IN THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE.

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CHAPTER V.

PICTURES OF THE LATE 'SIXTIES AND THE 'SEVENTIES.

IN his laudable ambition for the distinction of exhibiting a picture at the Royal Academy of London, Alma-Tadema was unfortunately delayed one whole year by a singularly regrettable accident. He particularly desired to send a picture entitled "Phidias at Work in the Parthenon" to the Academy, but for some reason the private purchaser of the painting declined to permit it to be publicly exhibited, very greatly to the chagrin of the young artist. This was in 1868. It was all the more to be regretted because in the previous year, as already mentioned, he had shown no fewer than thirteen pictures at the Paris Exhibition. He was awarded the second-class medal of the Exposition.

The picture which might have figured, but did not, in the Academy of 1868, shows Phidias immediately after he has completed his great frieze for the Parthenon. It is therefore a very grave and dignified conception, introducing as it does the great personages of Athens—Pericles,

Alcibiades, Aspasia—who have come to view the finished work. Truly a lofty and noble theme grandly treated, the artist so profoundly comprehending how to reproduce the marble the sculptor has wrought, and painting the colours of the sculpture as he believes they were placed.

In 1865 Alma-Tadema had painted the *genre* picture from the heart of Roman life, "A Lady Returning from Market," wherein the porter of her house is respectfully opening the door to admit the lady, her daughter, and her slaves. He followed this up with two different studies of Lesbia, these owing their inspiration to the poems of Catullus. In the second of these Lesbia is weeping over her dead sparrow, the effect recalling Juvenal's poem of the maid

> "Who wept until her eyes were red
> Over her darling sparrow dead."
> ("Turbavit cujus nitidos extinctus passer ocellus.")

With regard to this dainty picture, I believe it to be a fact that the critic of a German paper complained of Alma-Tadema for having made a Roman, "who had no pity for animals," weep for the death of a bird! The artist had only to refer this poor gentleman to Catullus.

The year 1866 found Alma-Tadema sending forth from Brussels his "Agrippina with the Ashes of Germanicus," "The Entrance to a Roman Theatre," "Glaucus and Lydia," and "Preparing for a Festival in a Pompeiian

House" ; this last a picture giving full scope to his power and sense of beauty as brilliantly exhibited in the girl weaving garlands for the approaching celebration.

The following year was memorable for the artist (apart from the Paris Exposition), as in it he completed three elaborate paintings—viz. "Tarquinius Superbus," "Claudius Summoned to the Imperial Throne After the Murder of Caligula,"* and "Egyptians Lamenting Their Dead." Of these the first-mentioned is a superb effort. The arrogant Tarquinius, a dominating figure, is seen striking off the heads of those poppies which have dared to grow taller than the others in the field. Viewed sheerly as a piece of painting, this is probably the finest conception of a field of poppies ever committed to canvas. In "Egyptians Lamenting Their Dead" the widow is bowed in grief at the feet of the mummy, and her anguish is not less strongly and characteristically portrayed than the surroundings, which are an absolute transcript of Egyptian life—and death.

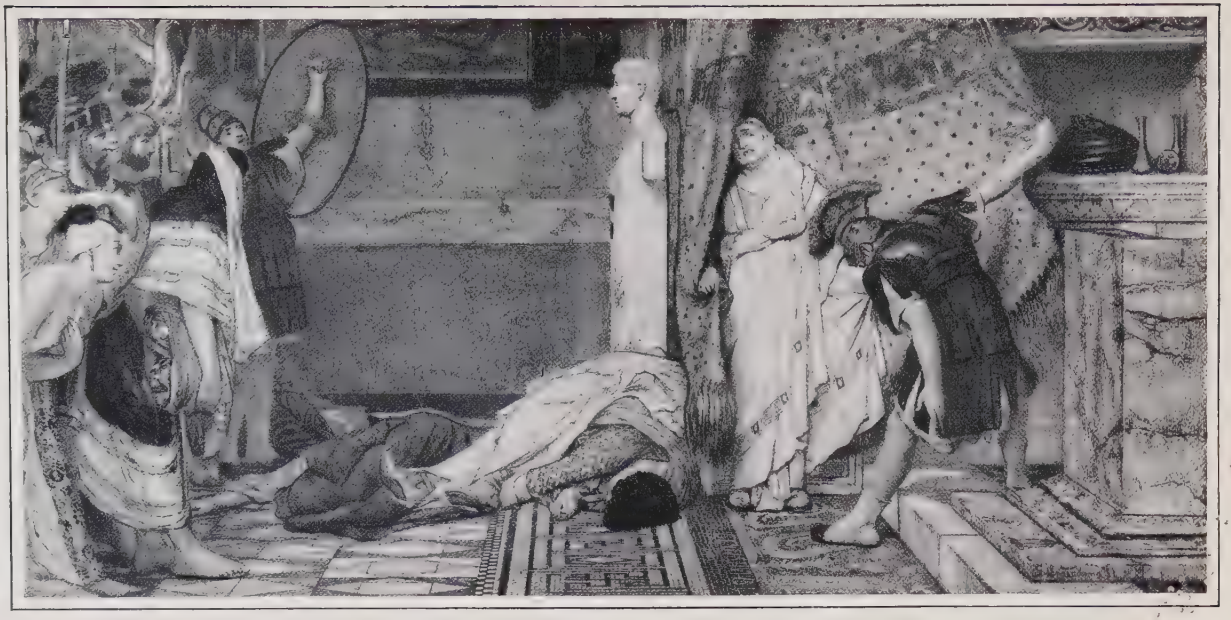
In 1868 Alma-Tadema selected a Greek theme, "The Siesta" :

> "In the cool shade rest thee now,
> Fair Bathyllus, in this tree ;
> Through its foliage to and fro
> Zephyr wanders dreamily."

"The largest picture" (I quote the *Art*

* Again treated by the artist several years later.

Journal) "that Mr. Alma-Tadema, whose scale of painting so often rivals that of Meissonier, apparently ever produced is named 'The Siesta.' Surrounded by bric-à-brac of the period, an older and a younger Greek are resting on their couches; roses, grapes, and an amphora of wine are at their elbows, and a flute girl stands by to soothe them with her music." (This picture is now in the Museum of Madrid, and was executed to show how this and the three other pictures, part of a decoration for a dining-room, were intended to be reproduced. The other series consisted of "The Service," "The Dinner," "The Wine," and "The Siesta." "But no one was tempted," says Alma-Tadema.) "But it is to works of a more characteristic style that we look for the artist's personality. As we like literature which is literary, poetry which is poetical, and art which is artistic; as we would choose to go to the northern countries not in that summer in which strangers are wont to see them, but in their characteristic winter, and to go to the south in its own characteristic heat and summer, so in like manner do we enjoy Alma-Tadema more the more he is truly representative of himself; not when he is painting in colossal size, but when he is making light, space, and air play in a little canvas of inches. Such a gem is 'Fishing,' hardly surpassed among its author's works. A pond in some luxurious classic garden has reeds and flowers on its banks;



A ROMAN EMPEROR.

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a woman is fishing with a golden wall behind her; and this picture, with its lucid water, its exquisite draperies, and its delicate gold, is a little school of colour."

The comparison with Meissonier is of surpassing interest. Not less than the French master, Alma-Tadema has very frequently adopted a microscopic method on a tiny canvas. A chief point of divergence is the distribution of the interest in a picture in the ratio of its significance to the whole.

During 1868–69 Alma-Tadema was employed upon his charming "Flower Girl," "The Boudoir," and "The Embarkation," the two last being subjects copied from the life of Roman citizens. "The Embarkation" became the property of Mesdag, the Dutch marine painter. There was at this time no end to Alma-Tadema's industry. "In 'The Sick Chamber' * (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum), and another superb picture which we might call 'Before Churching'—it might have served Claus Meyer as a model—he has been pleased to join the ranks of the old Netherlanders." In 1870 he finished "At Lesbia's" and commenced his beautiful "Vintage" composition, with its joyous priestess, lovely maidens, and lusty men. This is a long picture, almost suggesting that it might have been intended for a frieze. It speedily became celebrated on the Continent, owing to Blanchard's admirable engraving.

* Better known as "The Visit."

The famous "Pyrrhic Dance"* was the first of Alma-Tadema's pictures to be hung in the present Burlington House. This was in 1869. It was speedily followed by "The Juggler" in 1870, and by "A Roman Emperor" in 1871. "In this version," says Mrs. Edmund Gosse, "he ventured upon an entirely new scheme of colouring, to the despair, it is said, of certain of his clients, who saw in this departure an alarming tendency towards Pre-Raphaelitism. They felt that the public, which had lately learned to accept Mr. Alma-Tadema as an expounder of cool white marbles and pale-tinted robes, was not being fairly treated; for here he was, boldly introducing a copper-headed girl into the crowd of his Roman rabble, and clothing the very bodies of the dead in gay-coloured blues and vivid purples, while even the purity of the marble floor was not only stained with the redness of blood, but was everywhere cut up and intersected by distracting, many-coloured mosaics. This was, indeed, to open out a revolutionary prospect into the future!"

The theme is best described historically. "When the Prætorian soldiers had killed Caligula, his family, and the members of his household, they were afraid an Emperor would be thrust on them by the Senate. To ascertain whether any of the Imperial family had been forgotten, they returned to the palace

* For Ruskin's attack see Chapter VIII.

and discovered Claudius hidden behind a curtain. They carried him off to their camp, on Mount Aventinus, and proclaimed him Emperor to the bewilderment of all the world. He was the first Emperor who had to pay the soldiers for his election ; it was the beginning of the end." The picture is now in the Walters' Collection, Baltimore, U.S.A. To this Academy of 1871 he likewise contributed "Grand Chamberlain to His Majesty King Sesostris the Great." Singularity is perhaps the abiding characteristic of this work, which assuredly only one artist in the world and in the period could have painted.

Alma-Tadema is at once the fastest and the slowest of workers. In proof of this statement it is only necessary to compare his huge output of work in certain years (notably in 1873–74) with the two years of labour which he expended upon one canvas, "The Finding of Moses." With him, however, it is entirely a question of mood, and some of his most telling successes contain the most rapid of his work.

His first four pictures painted (at Townshend House) after his second marriage were "Pottery," "Reproaches," "Fête Intîme," and "Cherries." The life-size figure of a woman, reclining on a tiger skin and gazing longingly upon the fruit she is about to eat, is the basis of "Cherries," a very notable success which he subsequently presented to the *cercle artis-*

tique of Antwerp. Then came "Greek Wine," a picture so transcendently sparkling that an admiring critic thought the artist must have been inspired by the song of Meleagros:

> "Mix, when thou dost fill the goblet,
> With Heliodora's name the draught.
> And on my brow the chaplet set
> She gave me as the wine I quaffed!
> With tears its roses seem bedewed,
> As though the garland fair doth weep,
> Because within my arms I could
> Not Heliodora's fair form keep."

"Like this garland of flowers," sings a poet from the anthology of his Rhodoclea, "thou wilt bloom and fade." This fate will also be shared by the young Greek wife who in Alma-Tadema's work, "The Last Roses," is laying the late roses of autumn, as a pious offering, on the marble altar.

I have, for a particular reason, treated of "The Death of the First-born" (1873) on another page. It was followed in 1874 (a wonderfully prolific year) by that most singular picture, "Joseph, Overseer of the Granaries" —remarkable as being the only one of his friend's efforts that Ebers seriously criticised —by "Fishing," "Sunny Days," "Water Pets," 'Antistius Labeon," "A Peep Through the Trees," and by "The Sculpture Gallery" and "The Picture Gallery," which fairly set the seal upon their author's fame. They also paved the way for the violent attack by Ruskin

upon the methods of Alma-Tadema which was the feature of his "Academy Notes" of 1875, and was of such a character that it is desirable to quote it here in full:

"The actual facts which Shakespeare knew about Rome were in number and accuracy, compared to those which Mr. Alma-Tadema knows, as the pictures of a child's first story-book compared to Smith's 'Dictionary of Antiquities.' But when Shakespeare wrote:

> 'The noble sister of Publicola,
> The moon of Rome; chaste as the icicle
> That's curled by the frost from purest snow,
> And hangs on Dian's temple'—

he knew Rome herself to the heart; and Mr. Alma-Tadema, after reading his Smith's 'Dictionary' through from A to Z, knows nothing of her but her shadow; and that, cast at sunset. . . . 'The Sculpture Gallery,' I suppose, we must assume to be the principal historical piece of the year; a work showing artistic skill and classic learning both in high degree. But both parallel in their method of selection. The artistic skill has succeeded with all its objects in the degree of their unimportance. The piece of silver plate is painted best; the griffin bas-relief it stands on, second best; the statue of the empress worse than the griffins, and the living personages worse than the statue. I do not know what feathers the fan with the frightful mask in the handle,

held by the nearest lady, is supposed to be made of; to a simple spectator they look like peacock's without the eyes. And, indeed, the feathers, under which the motto 'I serve' of French art seems to be written in these days are, I think, very literally, all feather and no eyes—the raven's feather, to wit, of Sycorax. The selection of the subject is similarly—one might say filamentous—of the extremity instead of the centre. The old French Republicans, reading of Rome, chose such events to illustrate her history as the battle of Romulus with the Sabines, the vow of the Horatii, or the self-martyrdom of Lucretia. The modern Republican sees in the Rome he studies so profoundly only a central establishment for the manufacture and sale of imitation Greek articles of *vertu*. The execution is dexterous, but more with mechanical steadiness of practice than innate fineness of nerve. It is impossible, however, to say how much the personal nervous faculty of an artist of this calibre is paralysed by his education in schools which I could not characterise in my Oxford inaugural lectures otherwise than as the 'schools of clay,' in which he is never shown what Venetians or Florentines meant by 'painting,' and allowed to draw his flesh steadily and systematically with shadows of charcoal and lights of cream soap, without ever considering whether there would be any reflections in the one or any flush of life in the other. The

head on the extreme left is exceptionally good ; but who ever saw a woman's neck and hand blue-black under reflection from white drapery, as they are in the nearer figure ? "

Whether the above be sound or profound criticism, it is not for the present writer to presume to pass an opinion. It is certainly informed by much of the pedantry of style and form whereof Ruskin complains so bitterly in Alma-Tadema's works, as well as by a powerful leaven of the great critic's passionate love for what the French call " fine writing." I venture to add a brief extract from another source, also in regard to this pair of pictures, merely pausing to note that an apparent crime, in Ruskin's judgment, was the selection by Alma-Tadema of homely rather than noble or historical scenes.

" It must be boldly admitted," wrote the critic of *Blackwood's Magazine*, " that but one painter in Europe could turn out of hand 'The Sculpture Gallery' and 'The Picture Gallery.' Absolutely illusive in its details is the studio of the sculptor. Here sits, in marble, the mother of Nero ; we recognise the bust of Pericles, and the infant Hercules strangling serpents ; Pompeian lamps hang from the ceiling ; around are decorative reliefs ; and in the midst stands a basalt tazza, rotated by a workman, before wondering visitors. As usual, the inanimate marbles and metals, painted to perfection, are more living than

flesh and blood; and some might object to the huddling together into one studio of plastic works belonging to distant epochs and the products of divers lands. But a painter, provided only he constructs a good picture, is by common consent allowed considerable licence. The artist's masterpiece is, we are inclined to think, 'The Picture Gallery,' wherein a well-known picture dealer, standing in the midst, figures as proprietor or cicerone. As usual, the archæology is boldly defiant of critical doubts."

To this I may append a note by the artist himself:

"These two pictures were painted for Gambart, who had them in his villa at Nice up till the last—at least, he had 'The Picture Gallery,' the amateur being his own portrait, and the other figures men of his business. 'The Sculpture Gallery' he afterwards sold to Mr. McCulloch in London. The figures in it are the portraits of myself and my family."

After their public exhibition at Berlin—where they won for the artist the Great Gold Medal, and a few years later led to his securing that rare distinction, the Prussian Order of Merit—and elsewhere, Gambart jealously kept these two pictures in his villa at Nice, only showing them to the favoured few, for he prized them highly for many reasons.

Partly in Italy and partly at home (1875), the artist relaxed not his efforts, though the

art world of Europe now rang with his fame. He completed his "Cleopatra," and then, reverting to his Gregory of Tours and the Merovingian dynasty, he rapidly produced a trilogy with the quaint title "The Tragedy of an Honest Wife." The honest wife in question is the ill-fated Queen Galsvintha, and the three canvases treat of (1) her arrival with her dowry at her husband's court; (2) her assassination; and (3) the miracle after her death.

From this digression, "Back to old Rome!" would appear to have been Alma-Tadema's cry. "He is Coming" and "After the Dance" are in some sense sequels to one another. In the first, a rose-clad girl waits impatiently for her lover to take her to the feast—the festival of Bacchus; while in the second the dance is ended and the tired Bacchante rests her weary limbs on a wild beast's skin.

Alma-Tadema has been very much addicted to introducing, with masterly effect, tiger and other skins into his pictures of this *genre*. In his magnificent "An Audience at Agrippa's" (1875–76) there is an exquisitely painted tiger-skin. With this the artist himself was very much delighted, remarking to Miss Zimmern, "Can't you see him wag his tail?" This scene in the vestibule of the lordly Agrippa's palace was destined to attract an immense amount of attention, and particularly interested and appealed to English audiences.

"Hide and Seek," which followed next, shows us the Villa Albani at Rome (which Alma-Tadema once humorously described as "a glorified tea-garden") with a boy and a girl playing the old-fashioned game. The picture is further remarkable for its humour, its perspective, and its wonderful marbled effects. "A Nymphäum," again, is a study of a *balneatrix* descending into the bath, where, in the distance, women are bathing. "Hope and Fear" is an inimitable study of an old man, Grecian in mould and form; his daughter, armed with a bouquet of roses and myrtle, choosing the meal-time to ask her father to be allowed to marry the one she loves.

Meanwhile, Alma-Tadema had been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, to be followed by the fuller title of Academician three years afterwards—namely, in 1879. After "The Death of the First-born" it had been impossible for the authorities longer to neglect his claims to honourable distinction. The news of his election to an Associateship came to cheer him up during his enforced stay in Rome subsequent to the wreck of Townshend House.

The idea of a life-size figure, to be entitled "The Sculptor's Model," was suggested to Alma-Tadema's mind by the discovery, in 1874, of the so-called Venus of Esquiline. He completed this great canvas in 1877. The purity

"THERE HE IS!"

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of the conception, the wonderful flesh tints and the slender girlishness of the nude figure, formed a most compelling combination of charm before which every note save undivided admiration was silent. The girl is holding up her hair with one hand, the other resting upon a feathery fern, while the general attitude appears to signify a certain vexation at the monotony of a model's task. Alma-Tadema has reason to be proud of this creation of his. It exhibited his genius in yet another varying form and phase, and it considerably heightened his reputation among those best qualified to judge.

Previous to his departure for another Italian visit in 1878, he painted the dainty little pastoral of Pompeian life, "A Loving Welcome." Father, mother, servant, and dog are all greeting the little daughter who has returned home in safety. The male parent, evidently a "literary man" of the period, has hastily deserted his writing to greet the little wanderer. It is a picture replete with a joyousness that shines out of all the accessories as well—the garden with its beautiful coloured flowers, the glow of the tints—and you even seem to hear the very plash of the fountain joining in the welcome. The portraits in this picture are those of the artist himself, his wife, and daughters. The work was a commission from Sir Henry Thompson, whose portrait Alma-Tadema has also painted.

Nor must mention be omitted here of "Fredegonda and Galsvintha," a life-size canvas in which he returns for the moment to his Merovingians. In painting this fine work he drew upon his trilogy of "The Tragedy of an Honest Wife." "We see the chagrined Fredegonda watching with bowed head while Chilperic, the husband who is hers no more, is engaged in the great Frankish marriage ceremony—'breaking the willow branch'—with her hated rival Galsvintha. Near by an attendant on the bride bears, mounted on a long staff, the crown of gold of the Visigoths. The scene is effectively backgrounded by the church of red brick. The artist has rendered with tremendous power and fidelity the state of the wretched Fredegonda's mind as revealed in her countenance. The colouring and grouping generally are characteristically wonderful." This picture is now in the Museum at Vienna.

Nine of his collected works, headed by "The Death of the First-born," went to Paris for the Exposition Universelle of 1878. The reader will not be surprised to learn that the master's *chef-d'œuvre* had carried off the Gold Medal.

To the year 1879 belongs a particularly delicate study, "Well-protected Slumber." "Pomona's Festival" consists of dancers gyrating around a tree, whilst "After the Audience" was the humorous outcome of a

GOD-SPEED.

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request to the artist that he should paint a sequel or pendant to his "Audience at Agrippa's." The recent petitioners are depicted wending their way homewards, their backs turned to the spectators. It is noticeable that in all his output Alma-Tadema has never wearied of inserting quiet touches of humour such as this.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN," "THE FOUR SEASONS," AND "SAPPHO."

IT was in 1873 that Alma-Tadema gave to the world the great picture which must stand for all time as the supreme test of his genius. A few words may suffice to describe the leading characteristics of this conception of the last plague of Egypt. The beautiful dead first-born lies in the lap of the king (who, finding the doctor's advice of no avail, has gone to the temple to pray the gods for help), but with head resting against the mother's knees. A bandage surrounds the dead child's brow; his arm hangs down limp and motionless. Pharaoh sits as one petrified, but the mother in her passionate grief presses her cheek to the boy's pulseless heart. The baffled physician crouches by the side of the stricken monarch. At Pharaoh's feet the priests have flung themselves in circle around him, to pray for the first-born's recovery. Behind them the music and chanters join in chorus to induce the gods to yield; and through the doorway one sees Moses and Aaron, awaiting the tyrant's final decision. The canvas is a low one, conveying a remarkable effect of the presumed

height of the apartment. It is in every way an epoch-making picture.

Ebers' recorded opinion was: "The most touching painting ever created by an artist's genius."

Gnauth's criticism was: "This picture produces the impression of a divine hymn."

It is well known to be the one inspiration of his whereby Alma-Tadema is content to be judged. The painting is a prized possession, and it will always remain the cherished property of his descendants. It was commenced in 1857, was finished at Townshend House, and was exhibited not only in the Royal Academy of 1874, but also in Paris, Brussels, and Berlin, adorning the autumn art exhibition in the German capital. At Paris, in 1864, it won the Gold Medal. Professor Ebers, approaching it from the standpoint of the Egyptologist as well as of the artist, found it altogether faultless in exactness of detail as of treatment. And it has to be borne in mind that Alma-Tadema was an entire stranger to the land of Pharaoh (except for studying its antiquity and art) until years afterwards.

"There is one instance, one only," remarked a writer in the *Art Journal* in praise of this superb effort, "in which the painter of *allégresse* has with a serious intention attempted tragedy. And, unexpectedly enough, this is understood to be the artist's own favourite work, and the one which he retains as his own possession.

An Egyptian subject, it is treated with the principal of Egyptian qualities—repose. The last worst plague sent upon the oppressors of Israel is shown striking the beloved young first-born, a slender adolescent who lies across his mother's knees. She sits in her monumental grief while slaves crouch near in the formal attitude of sorrow. The picture expresses silence, and the painter has avoided any demonstrative expression in the eyes of his sufferers. The colour is rich and low, and thus altogether an antithesis to the sweet brilliance of Mr. Alma-Tadema's habitual work. And this brings us to one of his greatest merits as a colourist —the quality of colour significance. . . ."

There was literally not one dissentient voice in either the public or the critical appreciation of this great work. It is an astonishing *tour de force*. The *Art Journal* is scarcely accurate, however, in surmising that it is the only instance where the artist has "with a serious intention" attempted high tragedy.

In a rather remarkable romance of old Egyptian mysticism I came across a passage which is quoted here as giving in some sort an impression of the awe-inspiring Ten Plagues as suggested by the quiet horror of Alma-Tadema's great conception :

"Did not the king cover his eyes as he prayed to Osiris to save the land from the evil that had befallen his house? Oh, that awful day, spoken of with dread till the later evils

surpassed and hid it! I woke in the morning, and, going to the bath, it was blood! I looked from the window over the river; it was blood! Blood, clammy and cold and everywhere! I, even I, ran to the king where he sat brave and noble on his throne, giving audience to his councillors, and the fountains in the council court were blood too! And they said, 'It is the man Moses that has done this thing,' and I would have had the king kill him; yet he would not, so that the punishment of the gods fell on him at a later day, and he and all his brave host were lost in the cruel sea."

Turn we now from this to more winsome themes. It is not merely for the sake of contrast that I have selected "The Four Seasons," painted in 1878–79, for separate treatment in this chapter. As a matter of fact, this cycle of pictures forms one of the most important of all the master's efforts. The first in order, "Spring," shows a lovely young girl roaming a delicious meadow, the while she ponders what shall she do with the beautiful blossom that she holds in her hand. It is a picture filled with magical suggestion, rich in colour, and one into which he who runs may read his own secret.

Number two, "Summer," is the interior of one of the Roman bathrooms that the artist knows so well how to treat. The languid beauty sunk in the bath lazily fans herself with an ostrich fan while her sister reclines on a bench

fast asleep. Petals of summer blossoms float on the surface of the water. This picture gives full play to Alma-Tadema's skill in the painting of rich-veined marble and bronze, for the bath is lined with bronze.

In "Autumn" we find portrayed all the adjuncts to a thanksgiving for the year's vintage, headed by the vine-leaved, bearded Silenus. A garlanded Bacchante whirls in the dance around the sacrificial altar, with torch and wine-cup in her hands. A study full of warmth and movement and the joy of living.

The fourth and last "Season" introduces us to a winter of poverty but not of squalor. A poor family are sheltering and discussing a frugal meal beneath the shadow of a tall column, and the young mother and child are interesting studies in what is in some respects the most interesting of this quartet of "Seasons."

These pictures were commenced in Rome. Apart from the attention which they attracted when exhibited, they have become familiar to a very large public, thanks to the excellence of Blanchard's engravings of them.

About this time, too, "The Parting Kiss" came from Alma-Tadema's brush. It is a favourite child of his, this canvas, and still more so is another version entitled "The Departure," in which the delightful Pompeian mother and daughter are the artist's own wife and his daughter Anna, and the bust

THE PARTING KISS.

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of the father looking down upon them is that of Alma-Tadema himself. Since his marriage to Miss Epps he had frequently reproduced her wonderful red-gold hair in his pictures, and it was often remarked that his types of fair womanhood became more and more English in form and in colouring as the years slipped by. This particular painting became the property of Georg Ebers, the cherished friend of all three figures therein delineated, and very prettily does Ebers remark that "paintings are like children."

Further mention of Ebers recalls the circumstance that his friend's tiniest picture, "The Question" (1878), inspired him with the idea for a novel. The subject seems simplicity itself—a youth putting a question—*the* question, we will venture to presume—to a young girl who sits by the sapphire sea with her lap full of roses. Shown at the Exhibition in Munich in 1879, this dainty little picture proved itself possessed of power to attract over and above all its competitors. Ebers first based upon it a poem, of which the following translation from the German is by Miss Mary Safford, of America :—

"In the Art-palace on green Isar's strand
Before one picture long I kept my seat;
It held me spellbound by some magic band,
Nor, when my home I sought, could I forget.

"A year elapsed; came winter's frost and snow;
'Twas rarely now we saw the bright sunshine.

I plucked up courage and cried, 'Be it so!'
Then southward wandered with those I call mine.

"Like birds of passage built we there a nest
On a palm-shaded shore all steeped in light;
Life was a holiday, enjoyed with zest
And grateful hearts the while it winged its flight.

"Oft on the sea's wide, purplish blue expanse,
With ever new delight I fixed my eyes;
Tadema's picture, now at every glance
Recalled to mind, a thousand times would rise.

"Once a day dawned, glad as a bride's fair face.
Perfume and light and joy it did enfold;
Then, without search, flitted from out of space
Words for the tale that my friend's picture told."

From this poem, then, grew Ebers' idyl, "A Question," a tale of Sicilian life. The "question" of its title is: Shall the lovely Xanthe marry her childhood's playfellow Phaon, or shall she take Leonax of Messina? The old housekeeper Semestre favours the latter, and Xanthe wavers because she is told that Phaon has spent his nights rioting with flute-women. She finds him sleeping on a bench in the garden, sits by him till he wakes, and tearfully reproaches him with his wantonness. But on discovering that Phaon's sleepless nights have been spent in her father's olive-groves, in order that he might protect them from thieves, she at once relents, and the happy pair are betrothed.

In 1879 (the year in which the full honours

of our Royal Academy of Arts were awarded him), Alma-Tadema produced four very varied canvases in "Down to the River," "Not at Home," "The Garden Altar," and "The Temple of Ceres," in addition to "Well-protected Slumber." In "Not at Home" a Roman girl is telling a polite "fib" to a caller, a Roman gentleman, who, half-suspecting, gazes in as if longing to catch a glimpse of the lady for whom he is obviously enquiring.

In the ensuing year appeared his truly sensational "Ave, Cæsar! Iò Saturnalia!" this being the third occasion when he had striven to depict the (to him) most appealing tragedy of Caligula and Claudius. He had previously essayed it, the reader will recall, in "Claudius" and "A Roman Emperor, A.D. 41," both painted for Gambart. In speaking to me of this third and last Claudius picture, Alma-Tadema mentioned how deeply and completely he had saturated himself with every aspect of the fascinating subject. He added that it had always appeared to him that this election of an Emperor by the army in opposition to the Senate—in utter contradistinction to all that had gone before—actively foreshadowed the ultimate downfall of Rome. Like his two former variants of it, this picture is all blood, mosaics, armed men, cold glittering steel and gleaming marble, forming a grim and appalling *ensemble*. But the touch of humour is still not wanting!

As if for the sake of contrast pure and simple, he immediately followed up "Ave, Cæsar!" with "Sappho" (1881), a pure and beautiful idyl, inspired by those lines telling of the love of the poet of Mitylene for the female Homer:

"Surely thou know'st how, in the Lesbian land,
Alcæus oft the festal dances led.
Kindled by Sappho's charms, fierce glowed love's brand,
As, lauding her in song, the lute he played."

The conception is a noble and striking one, thoughtfully and beautifully reasoned in every detail, whilst the pictured scene, the "Lesbian strand," is almost exactly expressed in the lines just quoted. It was exhibited at Burlington House, where it was the great picture of 1881.

The clever remark of a tiny child is recorded *à propos* of the master's "Sappho."

"I feel when I look at that picture," said the mite, "I should like to wear clothes like that—I am so hot in these!"

Could there be a happier compliment paid to at least one phase of the artist's expressed intention? "Sappho" makes for the glory of cool-looking, cool-tinted robes, worn by the side of "quiet sands and seas." It is in the full sense of a sweet environment such as this one may have been that the genius of Lawrence Alma-Tadema shines out most supreme.

AN OLEANDER

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CHAPTER VII.

HIS COLLECTED WORKS IN LONDON—PICTURES OF THE 'EIGHTIES.

THAT which falls to the lot of every successful modern painter—the public exhibition of his collected works—became inevitable in the case of Alma-Tadema very early in the 'eighties. The chosen place was the Grosvenor Gallery in London, where the collected pictures of most of his great contemporaries have been shown from time to time. The chosen year was the winter season of 1882–83, and in the majority of instances public galleries and private purchasers co-operated loyally in striving to make the collection as complete as possible. That exquisitely grim little picture "Ave, Cæsar! Iò Saturnalia!" was there, and the artist himself of course contributed "The Death of the First-born." His first subject from the Land of the Ptolemies, "Egyptians Three Thousand Years Ago," painted in 1863, was lent by Mr. J. Dewhurst. Still earlier subjects, the famous "Education of the Children of Clovis" and "Clotilde at the Tomb of her Grandchildren," were sent by their respective owners, the King of the Belgians and M. Jules Verespeerewen, and were fittingly hung side

by side as belonging to the same epoch. That remarkable picture, "The Juggler," was there, and so also was the artist's conception of Cleopatra and, for the first time in London, "After the Audience."

In all, some one hundred and fifty of his pictures were gathered together at the Grosvenor. The exhibition could not be entirely complete, seeing that the prohibitive American tariff prevented the inclusion of a number of important paintings which had been sold in that country; but it was thoroughly representative of his art. Not the least interesting or attractive exhibit was the portrait of the artist painted by himself at the age of sixteen (in 1852), the dominant characteristics of which are a vigour and an earnestness filled with the promise of fulfilment. "The Question" was also there. In a word, visitors to the gallery had an opportunity of appraising both the earliest and the latest works of the artist.

A scholarly critic of *Blackwood's*, writing while Alma-Tadema's pictures were being exhibited at the Grosvenor, instituted a comparison between the artist's Roman and Egyptian forms—a comparison somewhat unfavourable to the latter. This critic, if acclaiming "The Death of the First-born" as one of the greatest works of the age that produced it, finds others of the master's subjects treating of old Nilus of rather unequal merit. Thus, he is unkind enough to suggest that "The

THE TORCH-DANCE.

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Juggler" is suggestive of a mummy, and that in the case of "Cleopatra" the onlooker is "not spellbound under her beauty, but with cold curiosity counts up the details, admires accessories, and stands wonderstruck at the painter's cleverness and sleight of hand." In the next paragraph it is admitted that Alma-Tadema occupies a high place amongst the few really *great* painters of Europe.

Far less original is this critic of *Blackwood* when he makes the supreme discovery that, "had the whole of Europe been searched, two stronger opposites could not have been discovered than Dante Rossetti and Alma-Tadema." Has anybody ever questioned it? Surely there could be no conceivably greater contrasts, in every way of art and life, than the ill-starred, splendid Italian Rossetti and the brilliant, optimistic Frieslander Alma-Tadema? Of the latter it is conceded that "if he is not precisely a poet, he has moments of poetic thought when he combines the old sense of line and form with the modern love of landscape."

In 1881 the artist's output had included, in addition to "Sappho," "Quiet Pets" (a lady playing with tortoises), "An Audience" (three Roman women in profile), "Pandora" (a water-colour), "The Tepidarium," and a Bacchante subject, "The Torch Dance"—an exceptionally heavy year of work even for him. In the following year came, in addition

to a very striking portrait of Herr Ludwig Barnay as Marc Antony ("the Antony of Shakespeare rather than of history"), "En Répos," his second conception of "Cleopatra," "Reflection," and "Young Affections." The last-mentioned shows us a beautiful garden scene with the figures of a woman and child, all filled in with masses of delicate blossoms and foliage. And mention of flowers reminds us that, according to Ebers, Alma-Tadema was once (1883) "fascinated for weeks by a large oleander which he had taken with him from Brussels to London, where for the first time it covered itself with blossoms." He would not rest satisfied until its rose-tinted glories had been transferred to canvas, and the charming result he simply entitles "Oleanders." A woman dressed in blue and dark green is standing under the shadow of the gorgeous tree, which is backgrounded against a red wall, an additional effect—one of the artist's very best and subtlest—being imparted by the sun shining through the leaves on water. The happy accident of Alma-Tadema having brought these oleanders from Belgium is to be held responsible, therefore, for one of the happiest of his fancies in delineation and in treatment.

It was while the very gratifying and eminently successful exhibition was in progress at the Grosvenor that Alma-Tadema worked upon a picture to which he gave the title "Shy." It is touched by a very delicate

humour, representing as it does a Grecian youth presenting his offering of Alma-Tadema's favourite roses, through one of Alma-Tadema's favourite doorways, to his ladylove, who turns her charming face away and is discreetly "shy." This picture resides in America now, having been painted for Mr. Theodore Miller. Alma-Tadema's diploma picture for the Royal Academy (1883) next demands a word. He entitled it "On the Way to the Temple." The foreground is filled by a priestess sitting under the portico of a Greek temple. The sun-rays shine fiercely down on the marble of the building, through whose open doorway the rejoicing Bacchanalians pass on their way to do homage to the god of their worship.

"Hadrian Visiting a Pottery in Britain" is also a successful work of Alma-Tadema. Its composition and all details are indeed exquisite. Did he not transfer the intimate life of the ancient Britons to the modern theatre when Irving staged *Cymbeline?* And he has, of course, always been an ardent admirer and thorough connoisseur of antique vessels. In this picture of the Emperor Hadrian, does Alma-Tadema wish (inquires one critic) to show his gratitude to the daughter of Dibutades the potter, who, according to tradition, invented his own art, painting? This canvas was an unusually large one, and it has since been cut up into three portions. It was painted at the suggestion of Mr. Minton. The best description

of the work that has come under my notice is from the pen of Miss Helen Zimmern, who reviewed it at considerable length shortly after it was first publicly exhibited. Miss Zimmern says :

"The Academy picture of 1884 was the celebrated 'Hadrian in England,' and is remarkable for several reasons ; because it is the first time that Tadema dealt with Roman Britain, a period well-nigh absolutely neglected ; and also because it is one of his largest works. At the top of the picture stands the Emperor, who with his followers is visiting a Romano-British pottery, probably a famous one of the period. The master-potter is showing his work, and the Emperor looks on with a kind of resigned determination that is excellently hit off. He is going to 'do' this thing, and though perhaps in his heart he does not feel much interested or capable of 'living up' to these pots, he will go through with his task to the bitter end. His toga is of beautiful purple, his tunic crimson, the other garments quieter in tone. Behind him stands his friend, Lucius Verus, one of the best figures in the work. There is that in the full coarse lips and eyes, in the indolent pose as he leans lazily upon a staff, which tells a whole history. He is a type not merely of a luxurious Roman, but of a luxurious man. To the Emperor's right stand Balbilla, a blue-stocking of her time, and the Empress, the latter talking with the potter's wife, whose

blue gown contrasts admirably with the rich reds. These are all grouped on a gallery, from which a flight of steps descends to the bottom of the picture. On it, his back towards us, is a slave, who, tray in hands, bears vases for inspection by the Emperor. He is followed by another slave, and the two fill the lower part of the picture. Beneath the arch of the gallery is a room where the potters are at work, small in scale ; but that to many persons is the most interesting portion of the whole picture. There is a charm about this workshop which is wanting in the other groups and figures. The corridor is adorned with a picture of Mercury, and on the shelves in an alcove are seen specimens of black and grey pottery of exquisite form and colour. But one of the most effective bits, one of those interesting little reproductions of antique life in which Alma-Tadema is so eminently happy, represents the altar of the household god. A snake is painted round it, and by a little lamp there is placed a votive offering of onions, sacred to the Penates. The potters have painted this inscription as a welcome to their Emperor :

> " 'Ave, Imperator Cæsar,
> Divi Trajani Parth. filius,
> Divi Nervæ nepos,
> Trajanus Hadrianus,
> Locupletator Orbis.' "

In 1884, too, Alma-Tadema made a great advance as a portrait painter. At the Grosvenor he

exhibited two interesting portrait studies, those of Amendola, the Italian sculptor, who is limned in his studio blouse working upon a silver statuette of Lady (then Mrs.) Alma-Tadema, and of Lowenstam, the etcher, also engaged at his work. The light and shade of this Lowenstam portrait are very noteworthy. Alma-Tadema also painted a striking portrait of his brother-in-law, Dr. Epps, who is shown—also at his work—watch in hand, seated at the bedside of a patient. This was followed, in the next year, by a picture of "My Youngest Daughter," wherein the artist father made a most enchanting study of his artist daughter. With the possible criticism that the details are a little unduly elaborated, this picture will always stand as one of Alma-Tadema's most successful examples in portraiture.

It is scarcely conceivable that Alma-Tadema should have painted "A Reading from Homer" in two months! I allude to the time occupied in the actual painting of this five-figure subject, since it is admitted that eight months were employed in the studies for it, and in work upon a picture which the master intended to call "Plato," but which he ultimately abandoned. "A Reading from Homer" is a large canvas. One is struck by the compelling beauty of expression in the faces both of the reader and his audience. Entranced and spellbound, they recline listening to the musical words of the bard, interpreted, we cannot

MISS ANNA ALMA-TADEMA.

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doubt, by a voice worthy of the occasion. All the faces are transfigured as they listen to that enchanting strain. The reader is laurel-wreathed, the lady is not less suitably daffodil-crowned. The numerous accessories forming the setting to an idyllic theme are none the less effective because inevitable in this particular environment. It might not unfittingly be regarded as a kind of companion painting to "Sappho."

It was hung in the Burlington House Exhibition of 1885, making a great and well-deserved sensation. In few subjects has the master surpassed the delicate and delicious flesh-tints of this grand picture. The criticism that the reader "holds the stage," so to speak, is met by the answering query—Who else should do so if not the actual interpreter of the magic bard?

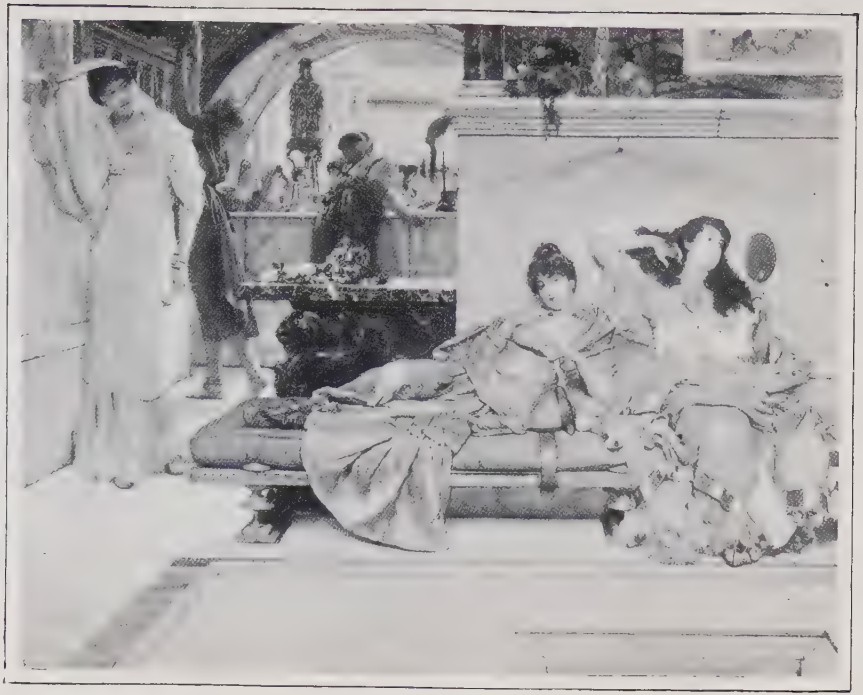
A small but bewitching canvas, "The Apodyterium," was the next outcome of his ever-fruitful imagination. The word means the tiring-room of a ladies' bath in ancient Rome. Every inch of the canvas is utilised to richest advantage, and loud were the expressions of admiration heard from the many who saw it in the Academy of that year.

The subject whereby he was represented in 1887, one of his most daring creations, was entitled "The Women of Amphissa." It brings to life the market-place of the ancient town, with a troupe of wandering Bacchantes lying

about in every imaginable attitude of exhaustion and languor. If this is a bold conception, what shall be said of the marvellous colouring of his picture of the following year, "The Roses of Heliogabalus"? This veritable fascination of colour-form finds itself in the rain of roses with which the guests of Heliogabalus are being pelted and covered. As Monkhouse happily phrased it, "His real progress was in freedom of draughtsmanship, in perception of beauty, in subtlety and exquisiteness of colour, in directness of pictorial intention, in gaiety of spirit. He teaches less, but he pleases more. May I add in a whisper that he gets more modern as he gets more human, using art only as a drapery for nature and the past as a cloak for the present." In him the artist had become the master of the archæologist.

"The Women of Amphissa" contains no fewer than forty figures. It was one of the only two subjects of Alma-Tadema that were sent to the Paris Exhibition of 1889, the other being his charming "Expectations." He was again awarded the Gold Medal, as he had been eleven years previously.

Amphissa was a city near Mount Parnassus, and the legend refers to the year B.C. 350. When the despots of Phocis seized upon Delphi, and the Thebans "made that war called the Holy upon them, it chanced that the women sacred to Dionysus (who were named Thyades), going mad with passion and wandering by



THE SHRINE OF VENUS.

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night, came unawares to Amphissa, where, being weary and not yet returned in their right wits, they threw themselves down in the market-place, and, scattered here and there, lay sleeping. Whereupon the wives of the Amphissians, fearing (since the city of Phocis was allied to them, and many of the tyrant soldiers were about) lest the Thyades should not preserve their purity, ran all together to the market-place, and silently stood in a circle round them; nor indeed approached them while they slept, but as soon as they had risen tended them and brought them food, and afterwards went forth with them in safety, even to the boundaries of their own land."

To the Academy of 1889 he contributed "The Shrine of Venus." This "shrine" is the interior of a Roman hair-dresser's emporium, whither have wandered two beautiful young girls to be suitably coiffured. So much absorbed are they that they barely take note of a tall, handsome matron, who, in passing towards the inner room, places her offering before the shrine of Venus. As she sweeps past the matron adds a marigold to the heap of variegated blossoms on a marble table in front of the shrine. At the counter-window some attendants, very skilfully drawn, are seen attending to other customers, and the glimpse of blue sky and the blue vase so skilfully set most happily combine with the view of distant buildings.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME OF HIS CRITICS.

IT was by no means immediately or universally admitted that Alma-Tadema had served an altogether admirable purpose by bringing a new note into British art. The new note *had* to be admitted; for there it was, dominant, resourceful, unimitative but not unimaginative, wholly original but not wholly unchallenged. The most important of the artist's critics—if by "important" is meant a certain place in the literary firmament — were Ruskin, Whistler, Professor Ebers, and Cosmo Monkhouse. Every one of these has passed away, but their words live after them. We have already seen what Ruskin wrote of "The Sculpture Gallery," and we will presently see what was the result of a longer and presumably closer scrutiny of the paintings on his part. For Mr. Whistler, the artist-critic's onslaught upon Alma-Tadema's work is too ill-reasoned to call for serious comment here, though in another place he speaks of Alma-Tadema's "symphonies" and "harmonies" of colour. For Ebers, we have previously noted that his comments were liable to be biassed, and his freedom of judgment blinded, by a too great and absorbing

enthusiasm—an adoring veneration, so to speak —for Alma-Tadema as an artist. For the late Cosmo Monkhouse, both in his fugitive writings and in the Alma-Tadema section of his informing work, "Contemporary British Artists," he displays a sound knowledge and appreciation tempered throughout by soundest and strictest judgment.

But Ruskin was prejudiced, and he took no trouble to conceal his prejudice. Thus much must be admitted, whatever value we place upon his criticisms. In 1884 he returned to the charge, in the course of his Oxford lectures during his second tenure of the Slade Scholarship. Then and there he said:

"M. Alma-Tadema differs from all the artists I have ever known, except John Lewis, in the gradual increase of technical accuracy, which attends and enhances together the expanding range of his dramatic invention; while every year he displays more varied and complex powers of minute draughtsmanship, more especially in architectural detail, wherein, somewhat priding myself as a specialty, I nevertheless receive continual lessons from him; except only in this one point—that, with me, the translucency and glow of marble is the principal character of its substance, while with M. Tadema it is chiefly the superficial lustre and veining which seem to attract him; and these also seen, not in the strength of southern sun, but in the cool twilight of luxurious

chambers. With which insufficient—not to say degrading—choice of architectural colour and shade, there is a fallacy in his classic idealism against which, while I respectfully acknowledge his scholarship and his earnestness, it is necessary that you should be gravely and conclusively warned. . . .

"Now observe, that whether of Greek or Roman life, M. Alma-Tadema's pictures are always in twilight. . . . I don't know if you saw the collection of them last year at the Grosvenor, but with that universal twilight there was also universal crouching or lolling posture, either in fear or laziness. And the most gloomy, the most crouching, the most dastardly of all these representations of classic life was the little picture called the 'Pyrrhic Dance,' of which the general effect was exactly like a microscopic view of a small detachment of blackbeetles in search of a dead rat. . . . Since the day of the opening of the great Manchester Exhibition in 1851, every Englishman desiring to express interest in the arts considers it his duty to assert with Keats that a thing of beauty is a *joy* for ever. I do not know in what sense the saying was understood by the Manchester school. A beautiful thing may exist but for a moment as a reality; it exists for ever as a testimony."

Side by side with Ruskin's harsh judgment we will place a German estimate. According to the author of "Modern Painting," Alma-Tadema

"stands to this grave academic group [Leighton, Poynter, Val Prinsep] as Gérôme to Couture. As Bulwer Lytton in the field of literature created a picture of ancient civilisation so successful that it has not been surpassed by his followers, Alma-Tadema has solved the problem of the picture of antique manners in the most authentic fashion in the province of painting. He has peopled the past, rebuilt its towns, and refurnished its houses, rekindled the flame upon its sacrificial altars, and awakened the echo of the dithyrambs to new life. Poynter tells old fables, while Alma-Tadema takes us in his company, and, like the best informed cicerone, leads us through the streets of old Athens, reconstructing the temples, altars, and dwellings, the shops of the butchers, bakers, and fishmongers, just as they once were. . . . By his works a remarkable problem is solved; an intense feeling for modern reality has called the ancient world into being in a credible fashion, whilst it has remained barricaded against all others who have approached it by the road of idealism. It is only in his method of execution that he still stands upon the same ground as Gérôme, with whom he shares a taste for anecdote and a pedantic, neat, and correct style of painting."

So that, according to Ruskin, Alma-Tadema's conceptions are of a "dastardly" character, and a not over-friendly critic from the Continent finds that his style is "pedantic,

neat, correct." Is not *fidelity* the word for which this writer is striving? Poor Alma-Tadema was positively accused of "pedantry" because he elected to paint true instead of fancy pictures of old Greece and Rome! It may be refreshing to turn to what Mr. Monkhouse had to say:

"While he belongs intellectually to the general movement of his time and to no particular nation, his purely artistic impulses and technical proclivities are clearly derived from his own Dutch ancestors. That decided preference for interiors and courtyards, with their subtle and complicated effects of reflected light; that wonderful skill in the representation of all kinds of substance and texture, that delight in beautiful colour modified and graduated infinitely by different intensities of illumination, that love of finish and detail; in all these predilections Alma-Tadema shows his nationality. Instead of Holland, he gives you Italy; instead of bricked alleys, marble courts; but in his blood is the spirit of Terborch and Metzu and De Hoogh."

This utterance is distinctly of interest, as implying Mr. Monkhouse's firm conviction that Alma-Tadema did not merely break away from his own convention when he started his classical work, but that this profound classicism found birth in that Dutch setting.

And yet, after all, what is truth? On the one hand, we have the singularly cheap criticism

of Ruskin that Alma-Tadema's stone is good, his silver less good, his gold bad, and his flesh worst. On the other hand, we have the opinion of the late Cosmo Monkhouse upon the "Pyrrhic Dance"—the painting that was bludgeoned so unmercifully by the sage of Coniston—that it stands out distinctly "by reason of its striking silhouette and impressive attitudes of the soldiers engaged in this famous war-dance. The action of the men, studied no doubt carefully from some ancient relief or bronze painting,* is admirably rendered. It is stealthy, alert, and formidable." The same scholarly critic points out that no other artist has made such free use of flowers to brighten his compositions. He opines, however, that in later life Alma-Tadema has permitted himself some "liberty of anachronism" in this regard by introducing the most recent varieties of clematis and of azalea into his Greek and Roman flower-beds. But what would you have? The flower sense is with Alma-Tadema a mania, and over and over again the beautiful blooms of his own conservatory have solved for him a picture-problem.

All his life long Alma-Tadema has known what he wants and what he can effect in the mastery of his art. His combination of rare skill with rarer judgment has ever served him

* Alma-Tadema's comment on this is, "No; only from a single figure on a Greek vase. The leading girl in the original, not fitting in, was omitted."

in good stead. And with these fine qualities are allied his altogether surpassing excellence as colourist and as draughtsman, frequently rising to such heights as actually to defy criticism. As Monkhouse finely says, he belongs intellectually to the general movement of his time and to no particular nation. And it is of more than passing interest to print side by side a notable utterance by Alma-Tadema and another by Lord Leighton. Thus the former :

"Art is imagination, and those who love Art love it because in looking at a picture it awakens their imagination and sets them thinking ; and that is also why Art heightens the mind."

"The enemy," said Leighton, "is this indifference in the presence of the ugly ; it is only by the victory over this apathy that you can rise to better things ; it is only by the rooting-out and extermination of what is ugly that you can bring about conditions in which beauty shall be a power among you."

By no means the least interesting or most unimportant of Alma-Tadema's critics have been a trio of accomplished ladies, in Mrs. Edmund Gosse, Mrs. Alice Meynell, and Miss Helen Zimmern. Mrs. Gosse, the wife of the well-known and brilliant man of letters, writes gracefully and well ; I have already noted her able and picturesque estimate of our artist's "A Roman Emperor." Miss Zimmern, whose

"HE LOVES ME: HE LOVES ME NOT."

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writings on art topics have attained considerable dimensions, has been aided perhaps more by a fluent pen and an apt and attractive manner of jotting down her impressions than by a very discriminating estimation of the artist's work as a whole. Her style is good, but her impression uncertain. Mrs. Meynell has acted as the art critic of a great daily paper, and was in every way well qualified to speak. Finally, Lady Colin Campbell has from time to time, in the course of her work as critic, had occasion to write of the pictures of Alma-Tadema at public exhibitions. Lady Campbell wields a fluent and graceful pen, and her judgment and appreciations on art subjects are always well worth listening to.

Whatever may have been the unanimity or otherwise of his British critics, the fact remains that England has been the country *par excellence* for the exploitation and the recognition of Alma-Tadema's great gifts. In wealthy Holland, with all its wonderful traditions of art, even after he had reached the pinnacle of fame, "neither the King, the Government, nor any art institute in his native land gave him the smallest Order, nor was any attempt made to obtain one of his masterpieces."* In Great Britain and America, in France, Germany, and Belgium, on the other hand, we have seen how different was the reception, how universal the acclaim.

* Ebers.

Yet in Holland, between 1856 and 1880, Alma-Tadema's brush did not earn more than a thousand florins! though a picture which he sold in 1867 for six hundred florins was sold again for thirteen thousand. It is betraying no secret of the prison-house to state that, although Alma-Tadema has earned large sums, he has never earned the largest. In no single year has he received £10,000, and only twice has he been paid £5,000 for a picture.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS WORK FOR THE THEATRE.

THERE is one immensely interesting phase or aspect of Alma-Tadema's work which I have not so far treated—his work for the stage. He has from time to time designed the scenes and the costumes in connection with the classical productions of three distinguished actor-managers—Sir Henry Irving, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, and Mr. F. R. Benson. This work has been done, of course, almost entirely for the Shakespearian revivals of the three eminent actors named; and here the master's intimate acquaintance with the art of old Rome and old Greece has invested with a peculiar dignity and charm some of the most memorable and most beautiful theatrical productions of our time.

His designs for Sir Henry Irving were confined to two plays, *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*. The former were executed by Alma-Tadema twenty years before they were utilised. They were carried out by the most notable scenic artists of the day, and, in the case of one of them, had the advantage of supervision by Mr. Comyns Carr, at that time managing director and adviser to the Lyceum Limited. I thought

it well, however, to ask Sir Henry Irving himself for an expression of opinion upon Alma-Tadema's work for the Lyceum, and from him I received the following response :

"Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema did all the designs for *Cymbeline* and for *Coriolanus* when I produced those plays at the Lyceum. They were, one and all, exquisite works of the highest art, full of imagination, poetry, and learning, and they must all live. In every case they were accurate lessons in archæology, and in *Cymbeline* he dealt with a period almost 'new' in art—the carved and ornamented wood, stone, and metal work of the early Britons. No praise could, to my mind, be too great for Sir Lawrence's work for the stage."

How characteristic of Irving, this generous letter ! So honourable to the artist who penned it, so flattering to the artist who inspired it.

It was followed by a communication from Miss Ellen Terry—the graceful Imogen and Volumnia of these two Shakespearian dramas—to whom I had written concerning the dresses designed for her by Alma-Tadema. Miss Terry wrote : "The costumes were very beautiful, but I can give you no adequate idea of the *colours*—the colour could only be expressed by Sir Lawrence himself ! He contrived to make me look like a young girl, which was a wizard's work, for it is not so very long ago since I played Imogen." But time has in any case dealt lightly with the ever-delightful Ellen

WANDERING LONGINGS.

By Permission of the Artist.

Terry. (It may be noted here, as a matter of interest, that in her own opinion the most exquisite of all the creations worn by Miss Terry throughout her long association with the Lyceum Theatre was one of her gowns in Mr. Calmour's poetical play, *The Amber Heart.*)

With Mr. Beerbohm Tree, Alma-Tadema has also assisted in the scenic production of two important plays, and on this point Mr. Tree writes as follows :

"The first production in which I had the advantage of Sir L. Alma-Tadema's hand and eye and brain was *Hypatia,* which I did at the Haymarket. It owed much of its success to his sympathetic help. Notably beautiful was the scene in which Hypatia addressed the school, which was like a painting by Tadema himself. Miss Neilson, you will remember, played Hypatia. Then, at His Majesty's, Alma-Tadema did *Julius Cæsar,* and brought ancient Rome on to the stage, with what grand effect I need not remind you. Here his powerful personality made itself felt, not only in the scenery and the costumes (which often he himself would drape), but in the very atmosphere of the play. Is there not in himself much of 'the noble Roman'? It was, indeed, always a joy when he appeared on the stage to dominate the scene. It was he who taught us the Roman handshake, the mutual grip of the wrist. . . . The presence of a *man* is always inspiring."

Commenting upon this graceful and handsome acknowledgment from Tree, Alma-Tadema told me that Sunday after Sunday, during the heavy rehearsals for *Julius Cæsar*, Mr. Tree attended at the artist's house the better to wrestle with the difficulties of the Roman garments. The *toga* especially interested and baffled the actor, who did not find that Dickens had spoken entirely by the card in describing the "toga-like simplicity" said to be so eminently characteristic of one of his immortal creations.

Mr. F. R. Benson has also, to a less elaborate degree, enjoyed Alma-Tadema's co-operation. "Years ago, when I produced the *Agamemnon* at Oxford," writes Mr. Benson, "Sir L. Alma-Tadema gave me invaluable hints and advice as to Greek draperies and costumes, folds, etc. I have a lively and grateful recollection of the skill with which he arranged draperies and folds, and of the simple beauty of the results, and I was much impressed by the infinite patience and labour whereby they were achieved. I also have in my possession some very beautiful scenery designed by him for the Oxford production of *Julius Cæsar*, and into this design he has harmoniously blended the same richness of detail and character as he so successfully puts into his Academy pictures. I have most pleasant recollections of the kindliness of the *man* and the wonderful skill of the *artist*."

The production by Irving of *Coriolanus* in

1901, for which, as just noted, Alma-Tadema supplied ten designs for scenes and costumes, turned out to be an artistic but not a financial success. It was found that this play, while not destitute of fine moments, is lacking in the sustained interest essential for stage purposes, and also lacks even the comparatively slight feminine interest of, say, *Julius Cæsar*. In this connection there is an old but good story of a stage hand employed at the Lyceum, who was reading an announcement of the play wherein the following passage appeared :

" Coriolanus—Sir Henry Irving.

" Incidental music by Sir A. C. Mackenzie.

" Scenes designed by Sir L. Alma-Tadema."

" Humph ! " remarked the stage hand thoughtfully, as he turned away with a slightly disgusted air. " Three blooming *knights*—and *that's* about as long as it will run ! "

As originally set forth by Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* was conceived in five acts and no fewer than twenty-two scenes. For the purposes of Irving's Lyceum revival of 1901, however, it was condensed into three acts and ten scenes. (The period here assigned is 494–490 B.C.) Two of these scenes were in the camps of the forest, two street scenes in Rome, the Forum, the interior of the Senate—this being a particularly telling scene as designed by Alma-Tadema and staged by Irving—the interior of Coriolanus' house, and three scenes in Antium—viz. outside the house of Tullus

Aufidius, the entrance-hall of the same, and the Forum. I have before mentioned that the designs were furnished by Alma-Tadema at Irving's request many years before the actual production took place.

They evoked from one enthusiastic critic the dictum that "If Sir Lawrence had not elected in his younger days to become a painter, he might have taken a remarkable position as an architect. His interpretation, based on the most profound archæological research, of the variety of design in Etruscan architecture, comes to us virtually as a revelation, and we still keep well within the mark when we assert that no piece has ever been represented on the stage which approaches in its architectural illustration that which has been set forth in the scenery of *Coriolanus*. For the moment, however, we are inclined to press his claim to be a great designer of scenes in that he has been able, with the ephemeral materials of canvas and strips of wood, to produce the illusion of solid architectural forms. This, we imagine, is mainly due to the fact that, when undertaking his task twenty years ago, he commenced by making a small model of the proscenium and stage of the Lyceum, measuring about two feet wide by twenty-two inches high, designing first a proscenium of his own which unfortunately was partially hidden in the theatre."* In this model he designed all

* *Architectural Review.*

his scenes to scale, making a series of water-colour drawings.

His designs for the Forum in Rome, and for the less elaborate Forum at Antium, were among the most effective of the stage pictures. But perhaps his most brilliant successes of the whole series were his models for the interiors of houses. This is especially true of the interior of the Senate House. The keynote of this fine scene was its simplicity, and the fact that virtually only three colours were employed, in the red and white robes of the Senators and the warm-tinted yellow of the stone piers, seats, and architraves. Before finally quitting this subject of the staging of *Coriolanus*, mention must be made of three other impressive scenes—the interiors of the homes of Coriolanus and of Aufidius, and the splendid moonlight view of Antium, showing the house of Aufidius, Unhappily, however, this scene was of far too short duration in the play, while also the "moonlight" was so brilliant as to do less than justice to the beauty of the master's architectural detail.

The original model and designs for *Coriolanus* were lent by Alma-Tadema to the Scenic Artists' Exhibition, held in London in 1905.

CHAPTER X.

PICTURES OF THE 'NINETIES.

"YOU do not *know* how difficult it is to paint pictures," remarked Alma-Tadema, with a pathetic intonation, to a friend. This was uttered in reference to the difficulty he experienced—a difficulty, indeed, by no means unusual with him—in bringing to a fitting completion his second study from the life of Cleopatra. He "finished" this picture no fewer than four or five times, and was more and more dissatisfied. He painted as many as four or five different backgrounds to it before hitting upon one which partially satisfied him. (The subject is the noble one of Antony abandoning his fleet to join the Empress as she reclines in her flower-decked galley.) Yet he had planned this picture in a manner that should seem to admit of no alteration, no dissatisfaction. His calculations, his dimensions, are unerring. "How do I manage to hit the right height of that figure seated in the chariot on the hill?" said he to Cosmo Monkhouse when speaking of another painting. "It is because I know that the road there

is exactly thirty feet below the level of the mosaic pavement of the hall in the foreground."

Pictures came thick and fast from his brush in the early 'nineties. To 1889 belong "Silent Greeting" (now in the Tate Gallery) and "A Dedication to Bacchus." Of the latter subject Alma-Tadema painted a large and a small study, the larger one being the property of Baron Schroeder and the smaller having been sold at Christie's for a large sum in 1903. In 1890 came the "Frigidarium" (painted for Sir Max Waechter), "Love in Idleness," and "An Earthly Paradise." In 1891 that delightful picture "A Kiss"—a lady stooping to kiss a little child, in a background of sea and sky—was also painted for Sir M. Waechter. The same year witnessed the artist's striking portrait of Paderewski. These varied subjects were rapidly followed by "Courtship" and "Comparisons" (1892), "A Corner of My Studio" (1893) (painted for the late Lord Leighton, and now in the Wantage collection), "The Benediction," "Spring," and "At the Close of a Joyful Day" (the latter for the Royal Academy of 1894), "Love's Jewelled Fetter" and "Fortune's Favourite" (1895), and "Whispering Noon" in 1896.

"Spring" is in every way a truly delicious inspiration. It is a large, long picture, and a great impression of length—or rather depth—is at once obtained from the animated figures flinging flowers from the walls of old Rome

on to the moving procession below. It is a May festival in Rome. The picture itself is a pæan of gladness. And the colouring! It intoxicates the senses, charms and satisfies the eye in every moment. What I may style the "notation" is so exact—there is no note that is wrong or false, and the whole conveys an impression of consummate ease on the part of the master who limned it. That such is not the case we know, Alma-Tadema being his own most critical and disdainful critic. One could imagine him spending long, sleepless nights in wrestling with the problem of the moment, the picture that obstinately refuses to "come right." This "Spring," for example, is the result of innumerable alterations, erasures, seemingly reckless scrapings down of canvas. And yet it comes out, in the fulness of time, a finished thing of great beauty and exquisite fineness. But we know that this desired end has not been attained without infinite labour and the loving care of a mother for her offspring. The artist might well have said with Swinburne:

"For the end is hard to reach."

"The Coliseum" was exhibited in the Academy of 1896, and to the announcement of it in the catalogue were appended these well-known lines from Byron's *Don Juan:*

"And here the buzz of eager nations ran
In murmur'd pity or loud-roared applause

A DEDICATION TO BACCHUS.

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As man was slaughtered by his fellow-man.
And wherefore slaughtered? Wherefore, but because
Such were the bloody circus' genial laws,
And the Imperial pleasure. Wherefore not?"

And it was of this painting that the critic of the *Athenæum* wrote at the time: "It would be difficult to do justice to the breadth, brilliance, and homogeneity—in spite of its innumerable details—of this splendid picture. The painting of the minutest ornaments, the folds of the ladies' garments, even the huge festoons . . . and the delicate sculptor's work of the vases and mouldings on the balcony, are equally noteworthy. Even more to be admired are the faces, of which that of the maiden in blue is undoubtedly the sweetest and freshest of all Mr. Alma-Tadema's imaginings." Her companion—the more stately lady, the mother of the child—who wears a diadem of silver in her black hair, illustrates a pure Greek type of which the painter has given us several examples, but none so fine as this one, which is very skilfully relieved against the peacock fan of gorgeous colours which she holds in her hand to hide her features from the crowd below. It is easy to imagine that in her noble spirit some thought of the victims of the amphitheatre arose, which explains the painter's intention in choosing the motto, "The Coliseum."

The Tsar of Russia, a great admirer of British art (and owner of one of the choicest

specimens of Sir Joshua Reynolds), became the possessor of Alma-Tadema's "Roses, Love's Delight." It is simple, and it is simply charming. A laughing girl, the daughter of the house, is burying herself in roses brought in as remnants from the garlands made for the decoration of the house, which is seen in the distance.

Especially in view of the fact that he is British only by adoption, Alma-Tadema must be said to have hit upon some splendidly *à propos* titles for many of his pictures. What could be more happily effective, for example, than this "Roses, Love's Delight" quotation from the *Anacreon?* Then we have, for the title of the delicious painting owned by Sir Ernest Cassel, "Under the Roof of Blue Ionian Weather" (Shelley). Again, for one of the artist's choicest effects (a work which is the property of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild) have been taken two of Browning's expressive lines from "Pippa Passes":

"The year's at the spring,
* * * *
All's right with the world."

Another picture most fittingly christened is "The Roses of Heliogabalus"; here the subject is an historical one, but the painter has touched a right chord, and has given it a simple and charming name. To go further back in the development of Alma-Tadema's art,

he touches a note of grim realism in the sub-title to "The Education of the Children of Clovis"—"The School for Vengeance." But one might go on for ever multiplying instances, of which the "Ave, Cæsar! Iò Saturnalia!" is a peculiarly striking one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KNIGHTHOOD AND ITS CELEBRATION.

THE list of honours in celebration of her Majesty Queen Victoria's eightieth birthday (1899) conveyed the popular intelligence that her Majesty the Queen had been pleased to confer the honour of knighthood upon Mr. L. Alma-Tadema, R.A. While, of course, it would be absurd to say that the artist was not immensely gratified by this mark of distinction from the Sovereign, it must at the same time be intimated that every one of his fellow-Academicians, not to speak of the general public, equally applauded the honour bestowed upon the celebrated Dutchman who yet seemed to be so much more English than Dutch.

It was very generally considered that some more than ordinary step should be taken in celebration of this high honour. For Alma-Tadema was only the third artist of his race to be honoured by a British sovereign in this fashion, his two predecessors in the knighthood having been Rubens and Vandyck, who were both so rewarded by Charles I. But although to ill-fated Charles Stuart belongs the credit of having also created the first artist-knight of British

birth—in the person of Sir R. Peake—it was long ages before another Englishman was so honoured. In the meantime, knighthoods or baronetcies were awarded to three more Continental painters by English monarchs—Sir Peter Lely by Charles II., Sir Godfrey Kneller by William of Orange, and Sir Nicolas Dorigny by George I. A sure passport to favour in those days was to limn flatteringly the features of our rulers; and this without the slightest disparagement to the great masters named above. It may be added that the first artist-knight preceded the first actor-knight by no less than two and a half centuries.

The celebration of Sir Lawrence's accession to his new dignity took the form of a banquet at the Whitehall Rooms, London, on the evening of November 4th, 1899. In the unfortunate absence from England of the President of the Royal Academy, Mr. Onslow Ford was called upon to preside over a gathering that comprised a hundred and sixty of the most distinguished names adorning the roll not only of Alma-Tadema's own art, but also of the allied arts. Among the faces to be recognised round the table were those of Frank Dicksee, B. W. Leader, Colin Hunter, George Frampton, John Sargent, Rudolf Lehmann, Baden-Powell, Comyns Carr, George Henschel, Byam Shaw, the Hon. John Collier, Sir George Lewis, Sir Trevor Lawrence, Sir Henry Thompson, Briton Riviere, Fuller Maitland, Walter Crane,

G. H. Boughton, Seymour Lucas, and Sir Francis Powell.

Apart from the graceful terms wherein Mr. Onslow Ford greeted the guest, the principal interest of this function very naturally centred in Alma-Tadema's own speech. He did not disappoint his auditors. Mr. Onslow Ford had aptly said, in dwelling momentarily upon the fact that Alma-Tadema had produced the great number of 273 pictures since he settled in England, that "nationality in the world of art counts for very little." Alma-Tadema crowned this saying by avowing that in allying his own art with that of England he himself had received great benefit, inasmuch as he believed that in the course of his researches in the English school he had developed a greater research for beauty. He said he was proud to think that the English and Dutch were brothers labouring in the same field, who by their works and aims had always enormously influenced each other with but a single object in view—and even, at one time, with a single ruler, William III. of Orange. If the Dutch had been the first great landscape painters (whose influence on himself no less a man than Titian had confessed), those painters had been the pioneers of the great English school of landscape painting. He remembered how, in 1870, he had sat next to Daubigny at the table of Lord Leighton, and the French master had said to him that without Old Crome,

Turner, and Constable, the modern French school of landscape painting could not have existed. And he wittily added that if his own countrymen had once fastened a broom at their masthead to show how they had swept the seas clear of their enemies, their English brethren might do the same now!

Not the least pleasing incident of the celebration was the example of a distinguished Royal Academician, who, quitting his seat, kissed Alma-Tadema's hand, and was in turn embraced by him.

That many-sided man, Comyns Carr—art critic, poet, playwright, editor, and theatre director—had composed for this occasion a kind of doggerel, entitled "The *Car*-men *Tademare*," which had been set to music by Mr. George Henschel. Mr. Henschel sang it, to the vast entertainment of the audience, and I here transcribe what may be termed its refrain or chorus:

"Who knows him well he best can tell
That a stouter friend hath no man
Than this lusty knight who for our delight
Hath painted Greek and Roman.
Then here let every citizen
Who holds a brush or wields a pen
Drink deep as his Zuyder Zee
To Alma-Tad——
Of the Royal Acad——
Of the Royal Acadamee."

On the day after this noteworthy festival

the press of the country honoured Alma-Tadema with long and appreciative notices, several of them marking the event by leading articles of a wonderfully complimentary and unanimous description.

It is impossible to overlook the fact that the artist's sunny geniality and lovable personality played an important part in the singularly complete character of this festival in his honour. Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to state that there was no more popular dignity conferred in the honours list of the year than the knighting of Lawrence Alma-Tadema. The right note was sounded in the following happy little appreciation: "Alma-Tadema's double nationality, his Dutch birth, his long English residence, coupled with his classic tastes, his admiration for the Japanese, have contributed to render his art a curious complex of conflicting tendencies—tendencies that in themselves are again welded into a harmonious whole by the idiosyncrasy of the man. We seem to feel, even through the medium of his pictures, his kind-heartedness, his quick appreciation of all that is good and beautiful, his dislike of mystery, of vain searchings in dark mental places, his love of sunshine, moral and real. Others might paint his portraits as well, but none can paint those exquisite southern idyls of which such numbers have issued from his brush and brain. He has been called the painter of repose. I should rather be in-

clined to style him the painter of gladness, of the joy of life. The world has certainly been rendered sunnier by his works."

Mr. Joseph Hatton tells how Alma-Tadema once described to him the genesis of the legs of a horse which figure in one of his Pompeian subjects. "It was in this way," he explained. "Driving to Brompton in a hansom, a greengrocer's cart came out of a street ahead, the horse galloping. I could only see the back of the cart and the lower part of the horse's legs. I took note of it all the way. It turned off into a street close to the house I was going to. I jumped out and I said, 'Give me a bit of paper.' I had a pencil. I put down the result of my observations as fast as I could —my friends thought I had gone a little mad —and the horse's legs before you are those of the animal in the greengrocer's cart; but I think I must work them out a little more."

On which Mr. Hatton's humorous comment is, "Fancy that London cart linking to-day with the classic life of Pompeii!"

CHAPTER XII.

"THE FINDING OF MOSES"—PORTRAITS AND WATER COLOURS.

SIR LAWRENCE was a deeply interested member of Sir John Aird's party for the opening ceremony in connection with the working of that stupendous undertaking, the Nile Dam, in 1902. Very naturally Alma-Tadema found himself filled with a supreme delight at witnessing the scenes that had inspired his brush so many times, and not a moment of his brief tour in Egypt was wasted. Sir John was profoundly anxious to have an important painting on an Egyptian subject from his brush, and what the exact theme should be was the topic of numerous conferences between them. Finally, Alma-Tadema gave Sir John his choice of three subjects, and without a great deal of hesitation he selected the familiar one of "The Finding of Moses."

Shortly after returning to England (with innumerable studies in his mind's eye), Alma-Tadema commenced work upon this picture—for him, an exceptionally large canvas. In fact, so hard and continuously did he labour at it that in the Academy of 1904 he was represented by only one canvas, this being the

dainty tone-poem entitled "The Ever-new Horizon." It is a small canvas, and so wretchedly was it placed at Burlington House, between two huge life-size portraits that completely killed it, as to call forth complaint from many visitors to the Academy. In this connection it may be well to reproduce some caustic remarks of Mr. M. H. Spielmann, penned *à propos* of the Academy of 1901:

"It is safe to say," wrote Mr. Spielmann, "that not one in a hundred visitors to the Royal Academy realises how much the pictures exhibited there suffer from the conditions of display. The artists know it; they know it only too well. With few exceptions they have suffered from it for years, and still suffer in silence, and, incomprehensibly enough, they seem willing to go on suffering without any attempt to effect the simple remedy. I refer to what is proudly called 'the searching light of the Academy'—a very excellent thing when Old Masters are shown in the winter exhibitions, but a cruel and unnecessary ordeal to newly painted pictures. In no other *salon* of importance, it may be said, is the untempered light allowed to fall upon the canvases; a velarium or a muslin screen is used to soften the unmitigated brilliance of illumination that otherwise imparts a crudity even to low-toned pictures, and fatally accentuates the harshness of a strongly painted work. . . . When we find equal harm done to pictures so utterly dis-

similar in their qualities and values as M. Benjamin-Constant's vigorous picture of Queen Victoria, and the exquisite masterpiece of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, we can no longer doubt the desirableness of the more judicious method of exhibition."

To return to "The Finding of Moses," a canvas on which Alma-Tadema wrought for many months with limitless patience, loving care, and matchless skill. It is so essentially a new rendering of an old theme that it would perhaps more exactly be called "An Episode of the Finding of Moses." The child is being borne along by careful arms, while Pharaoh's daughter, leaning down from the palanquin in which she is carried by her servants (priests of the lower degree belonging to the House of Phta), gazes with a wondering admiration into the cherub face of the babe. The Nile that they have just left is seen filtering away through the arid background of muddy desert. Upon this picture Alma-Tadema worked for two solid years (1903–4), until his wife pathetically pointed out to him that the infant Moses was "two years old, and need no longer be carried."

This noble biblical subject was destined to win its artist great renown in the Royal Academy of 1905. Its appeal, especially to those of us who know Egypt, is irresistible.

The artist was profoundly impressed by this his first visit to the Egypt of his imaginings.

He was there for only six weeks, but the fact of his going at all must have imparted an additional zest to his task of painting this new picture. With the great dam he was delighted, as well as fully alive to its enormous importance. Yet the Nile Dam, according to a recent writer, is "a perfect success *as far as it goes*, but it does not go far enough. It can never silt up, for while the Nile is discharging its flood of muddy waters the whole of the sluices are open, and the river passes through without parting with its silt; this is the great feature of the dams, for Egypt would be considerably the poorer if deprived of this rich silt. When the turbid flood has passed and the comparatively clear water-supply of the river has begun to arrive, the sluices are gradually closed and the reservoir filled. No additional water is needed for irrigation between March 1st and May 1st, as the river naturally has enough for the requirements of the area at present under crop at this season. The earlier the flood, the more effective the reservoir."

It may be a favourable moment now to make mention of two branches of his art which have been to a very great extent overshadowed by Alma-Tadema's more ambitious work: I allude to his water-colour pictures and his portraits. In the realm of water colour he has had few equals, and he has been an eminent member of the Royal Water Colour Society since 1873.

"Xanthe and Phaon," painted in 1883 and acquired by the Walters Art Gallery of Baltimore, has an interesting story attaching to it. This is a water colour from the painting called "The Question," which had originally been suggested as the subject of a novel to Ebers,* so that the suggestion originally made by the novelist returned again, as it were, to the artist. The delicious water colour, "'Nobody asked you, Sir,' she said," has gone to Australia, whilst "Pandora" belongs to the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours. In these lesser effects, as well as in many of his portraits, Alma-Tadema's extraordinary "touch" and inborn sense of beauty combine to enhance almost every subject he has approached. Incidentally, the master painted the scenes for the tableaux given in aid of the inundated Rhenish provinces.

Numerous as are the portraits he has painted, Alma-Tadema has never been a portrait-painter in the strictly professional sense of that term. It follows that the portraits he has executed are, one and all, stamped with a peculiar and most interesting individuality—for he has never attempted a portrait without feeling strongly attracted to his subject, and being almost convinced that the results would be in accordance with his own conception and his own hopes for the picture's success. His sitters have included personages no less

* See p. 67.

SIR ERNEST A. WATERLOW R.A., P.R.W.S.

renowned and no less diverse than the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, the Duchess of Cleveland, Sir Ernest Waterlow, Paderewski, Mr. George Henschel, Sir Félix and Lady Semon, and Sir Henry and Lady Thompson. His female portraits are few, but very noteworthy, including as they do Lady Alma-Tadema, Mrs. Charles Wyllie, and the wife of Mr. F. D. Millet, the Transatlantic artist. But over and over again has Alma-Tadema introduced the likenesses of relatives and friends into his pictures. This is notably the case with "Spring," in which the Roman lady and gentleman looking down upon the superb spectacle are easily recognisable as Mr. and Mrs. Henschel, the well-known musicians, and their daughter, now Mrs. Wolfram Onslow Ford.

On the important question of the expediency or otherwise of art schools for travelling students, Alma-Tadema is reported as having said, "Of what use is it to try and graft a branch laden with fruit upon a sapling? If the sapling has no trunk, how is it possible to effect a graft? Rubens followed the right principle, and so, after having extracted from foreign travel the best it could give, he still remained Rubens. But what would have happened if he had undertaken his journey prematurely—that is to say, before the artist inside him was fully developed? . . . It is my belief that an art student ought not to travel. When once he has become an artist,

conscious of his own aim, of his own wants, he will certainly profit by seeing the works of the great masters, because he will then be able to understand them, and can, if necessary, appropriate such things as may appear useful to him. With one or two exceptions, the *Prix de Rome* men are not the foremost of their day. Meissonier, Gérôme, Leys, remained at home until they had become consummate artists. Rembrandt never left Amsterdam, and Rubens, when travelling through Italy, made some sketches after Leonardo da Vinci which might pass as original Rubens, because Rubens was already Rubens when he did them. Vandyck and Velasquez travelled when they were already Vandyck and Velasquez, but not before."

In the Birthday Honours List of 1905, His Majesty King Edward VII. (who had previously done the painter the honour of personally visiting his studio in order to see "The Finding of Moses") conferred upon Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema the high distinction of the Order of Merit. Since the first appointments to this Order, three years before, it had only been given to one artist, viz., to the late G. F. Watts. It was now awarded to Alma-Tadema and to Mr. Holman Hunt.

LADY ALMA-TADEMA AND HER FAMILY.

By Permission of the Artist.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN APPRECIATION.

IT is a commonplace to say that Alma-Tadema is in every way a most engaging personality. It is, indeed, impossible to doubt that the artist's innate kindliness of heart has been a not unimportant factor in the splendidly complete success of his life work. The kindliness that I speak of beams from his bright, fearless blue eyes, and is scarcely less noticeable in the forceful, yet always sympathetic, manner of his conversation when animated.

In appearance he is a small but strongly built man, speaking English with a pleasant accent that betrays his Friesland descent. Alma-Tadema is moustached and bearded. Both are fair, scarcely inclined to turn grey, and you would certainly not for one moment suppose that he had been born in the year 1836. In every way he seems a study in perpetual youth.

He loves music, and he loves flowers. When working on "Heliogabalus" during the dark

winter months, he had roses sent to him from the Riviera twice a week to serve as "models," so that he literally had a model for each individual blossom. Nor is it often that one encounters so well-stored a mind as his. Obsessed less by the conventions of his art than by its infinite possibilities and limitless limitations, he has lived his life in a world peopled with the absorbing beauties of an exquisite colour-sense, and the legends and glories of a rarely beautiful imagination. Well might he say, with one of Maeterlinck's characters, "It was not possible, because it was not beautiful," so abnormally acute is his sense of beauty not merely in matters relating to his art. And this perfection of beauty in all the work of his hand and brain is, as I have pointed out so frequently, largely based upon his perfection of detail. Nothing is too trivial to escape him.

A friend once asked him, "What is your favourite recreation?" "Painting," replied the artist. His works number from three to four hundred; and as an example of his wonderful thoroughness it should be stated that his "first sketch" for a picture is always done upon the canvas itself, and with the aid of models. Scrupulous care is taken with the arrangement of every figure and every detail, for no critic of his work is one-half so severe as Alma-Tadema himself. After numerous erasures begins his real hard labour. He is

often very despondent and dissatisfied when a picture is in progress ; perhaps the art would not be so great if he were always buoyant. And what can one say of his versatility that has not been said ? At one moment he is pre-eminently the artist of old Rome ; the next, he comes before his audience in quite another guise—in the garb of a past so *spirituelle* and so idealised that in imagination we " live " the period that he spreads before us on the living canvas.

In connection with Alma-Tadema's love for music, I recollect his telling me, with a boyish enjoyment of the incident, how a friend of his, a professor of music, spent years in deploring the untoward fate that had made Alma-Tadema a painter and not a musician ; until, at long last, he was brought to acknowledge and confess that fate had been right.

" Nothing is to be done except by close application " is a favourite axiom of Alma-Tadema's. He is of all men the most implicit believer in the gospel of hard work ; it is hard, but it is good. He has always preached that there is no royal road to success ; and he himself is a shining example of the battle that may be won by pluck and determination, those two good allies, especially when, as in his case, they are linked to that great quality which has been cheaply described as " an infinite capacity for taking pains." Friendless and unaided as he was when first he

launched out upon the stormy sea of an art career, the place to which he ultimately attained may be not unsuitably defined as unique.

He is extraordinarily methodical in his habits. Care and orderliness distinguish every little task of his daily life, and he does not even care for his daughters to "tidy up" the studio. His paint-brushes are washed by his own hands. His library is catalogued and classified by himself. The whole of his correspondence—a big slice out of the working day—is conducted by himself unaided. And woe betide the unwary visitor who calls in the morning hours whilst Alma-Tadema is working! Every hour of the precious daylight is dedicated to his calling when he is at work upon a picture.

Alma-Tadema has had but few pupils, and of these by far the most prominent are his own wife, his cousin, H. W. Mesdag, and the Hon. John Collier. He is, says Miss Zimmern, "the kindest and most large-hearted of teachers. His appreciation of the works of others is wide and sincere, and no matter how different this work may be from his own style and taste, he gives to it its due meed of praise, provided it be executed with honest intent. London society is familiar with this wiry, strong-set figure, with the face of kindly comeliness, with the cheery voice, with the frank, observant eye, the merry quips and cranks, the energy, the intense love of all

that is great and good and lovely. To be with him is to feel invigorated, for he seems to have so much superfluous vitality that he is able to dispense it to his surroundings. Of his art he rarely speaks, and still more rarely of his art theories. Indeed, he is no theorist, though he knows perfectly well at what end he aims, and his art, like his personality, is homogeneous throughout. But it is not in his nature to analyse ; he follows his instincts, and these are true and right. 'To thine own self be true' has been his life motto, and faithfully has he served it."

His friend the late Georg Ebers has left on record the following beautifully expressed tribute to the artist, than which nothing could be more simply or sincerely rendered : "The tree shall be known by its fruits ; whoever knows these, knows the man himself. In my opinion, the time for a complete picture of Tadema's personality has not yet arrived ; he is still, thank God, among the ranks of the living, and when in the future his last hour strikes many hands more skilled than mine will hasten to write his eulogy. As for me, I can only say that I consider it a special favour of fortune to be permitted to call this rare, highly educated, warm-hearted man, and genuine artist, my friend. With so much genius, such a wealth of knowledge, and such unusually wide renown, he has retained a charming simplicity of character. Whoever knows him, knows the

source of the light and sunny cheerfulness that irradiates many of his paintings ; they proceed from his pure, chaste soul, which is overflowing with them. I shall never forget his face and the sparkling of his artist-eyes as one May day, while we were driving with our wives amid sunlight, fresh spring foliage, and singing birds, through the unpretending Leipsic Rosenthal, he exclaimed, 'Ebers, the world is still beautiful!'"

Alma-Tadema is very funny on the subject of what he terms the public appreciation for art with the big A. This, he says, has especially surprised him in the department of portrait-painting. "It always astonishes me," he once remarked to a friend, "that our modern public, with its love of the natural, should still be devoted to the old principle of portraiture. A head and some clothes, sometimes one or two hands, and the rest some black or brown. In fact, a portrait depicting a person under conditions they are never seen in. I, for one, never see my friends, never see anybody, without seeing at the same time more or less of the place in which I meet them ; of course, to paint the surroundings and study them and work the whole into a picture, involves a great deal more trouble than to rub the canvas full of a certain nondescript colour. But if I were to order the portrait of somebody dear to me, I should certainly like to have that person painted surrounded by accessories which

awakened in my memory (say) a pleasant meeting, or pleasant hours."

It were sheer waste of time to speculate upon whether a great man be the product of the age in which he lives, or the age the product of the great man. Alma-Tadema's secret, alike in his life and in his work, is the splendid and most rare secret of controlled impulses—of what Swinburne has so finely called "governance of blood" and "lordship of the soul." And Alma-Tadema is intensely human. Although he has always loved the home circle best and first, he has not been averse to a little genial conviviality outside it; and Mr. Monkhouse, in recalling how he saw Alma-Tadema mixing in the throng at a fancy ball of the Institute of Painters in Water Colours "crowned with a massive wreath of blue-bells," pauses to wonder whether there may not run in his veins some of the blood of the Roman Emperor he was personating. Who shall say?

The ever-difficult and baffling task of examining and appraising the work of a living artist, both in the light of the artist's accomplishment and its relation to the art of the period in which it has been accomplished, has been rendered yet more difficult in the present instance by reason of the writer's personal acquaintance with, and affection for, the artist. But one thing is certain. The place that Lawrence Alma-Tadema has won amongst the

great masters of the world is not of an age. Posterity will do him still fuller justice than contemporary criticism has done—great and adequate though this be—and its truth, its beauty, and its matchless craft shall combine to place the product of his brush and brain side by side with the highest and purest of the art of the world for all time.

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PRINTED BY CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED, LA BELLE SAUVAGE, LONDON, E.C.